



Advocate

June 2015

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Foster Care

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Foster Care in America

Foster care in America began in the 19th century with an effort to find homes for homeless children. In the early 20th century, children were placed in orphanages, but, by the middle of the century, evidence of the damaging effect of institutions led to a move to place children who could not stay in their homes with other families.

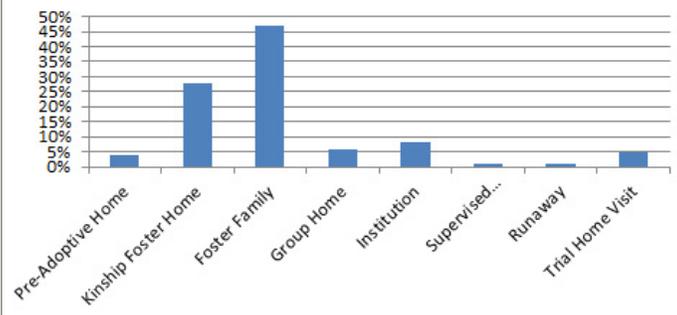
More than 400,000 children were in foster care in 2013, according to the most recent national Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) report. Of these children in care, over a hundred thousand were waiting to be adopted. Around a quarter of a million children entered care in 2013, and slightly fewer children exited care. On average, children stayed in foster care for 20 months, but half of them stayed 13.5 months or fewer, with one in 20 exiting care after 5 years.

Family reunification was the goal for more than half the youth in custody, with adoption the goal for another fourth. Smaller percentages had a goal of living with another relative, long-term custody, emancipation or guardianship. A case plan goal had not been established for 7 percent of the children.

A fourth of children enter into care before age 1. The average (mean) age at exit from care is 9, and half of children

Most Recent Placement Setting

National Data - Sept. 30, 2013



leave state custody before age 8. Nearly 60 percent of those leaving care returned to their home (51 percent) or to the home of another relative. More than a fifth of those leaving were adopted. Ten percent of those in care, twice the number for whom this was a goal, left because of emancipation (See information on transitioning youth).

- Child Welfare Information Gateway, “Child Welfare/Foster Care Statistics”: <http://1.usa.gov/1BsplmT>.
- U.S. HHS Children’s Bureau, Adoption and Foster Care Statistics: <http://1.usa.gov/1J5wrEa>;
- U.S. HHS Children’s Bureau, Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FFY 2002-FFY 2013: <http://1.usa.gov/1dA18pB>;
- Chapin Hall Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data: <http://bit.ly/1Hwk53u>.

Foster Care in Tennessee

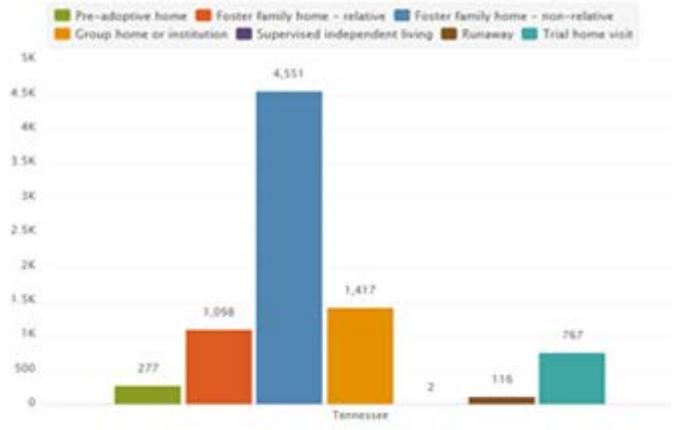
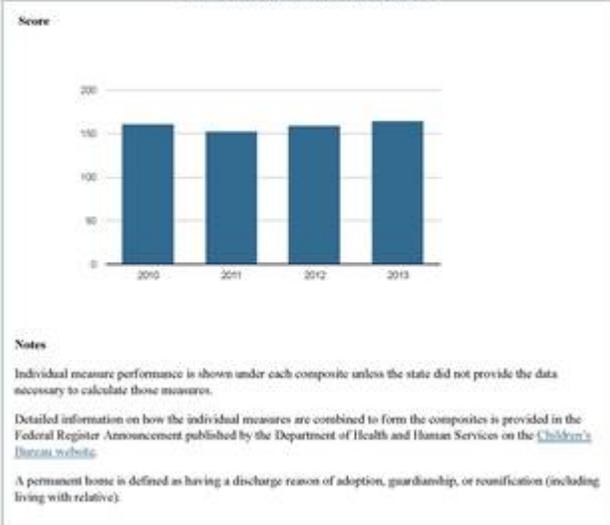
In 2013, nearly seven thousand Tennessee children were committed to state custody. There were 7,786 children in state custody in 2013, and half of them stayed in the state’s care for fewer than 10 months.

The *Adoption and Safe Families Act* requires an annual report of each state’s progress in meeting seven outcomes. A link to 2013 Tennessee information is below.

As we mentioned in an earlier newsletter, Tennessee Department of Children Services (DCS) Commissioner Jim Henry was honored for his work, including achieving highest levels on the federal outcome measures, by Childhelp, a national treatment and prevention organization. Among the reasons for the honor were developing robust foster parent recruitment and improving relationships with providers of services to the children in its care. DCS has achieved accreditation by the national Council on Accreditation (COA) for most of its services, including Foster Care, Juvenile Justice Case Management and Kinship Care Services and is working to be the first state agency to have its juvenile training centers accredited.

Knowing that removing a child from the only home he or she has ever known is damaging, DCS has also created In Home Tennessee to provide better services to keep children in their homes.

Composite 3: Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care for Long Periods of Time
Tennessee: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013



CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE BY PLACEMENT TYPE: ALL (NUMBER) - 2013

National KIDS COUNT
KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

- Children’s Bureau, State Foster Care information: <http://1.usa.gov/1Fen677>;
- COA-Tennessee DCS: <http://bit.ly/1KtpUSo>;
- Tennessee Department of Children’s Services: <http://www.tn.gov/youth/>;
- U.S. HHS Children’s Bureau, “Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data,” <http://1.usa.gov/1J96nYH>.

Every Kid Needs a Family

Every Kid Needs a Family: Giving Children in the Child Welfare System the Best Chance for Success, a new policy report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT® project, calls on child welfare agencies to increase efforts to place youth removed from their homes with relatives or foster families.

"We know how important it is for children to live in a healthy family placement where they receive the attention, guidance, nurturing and love of a caring adult and learn how families should interact," said Linda O'Neal, TCCY executive director. TCCY is the state KIDS COUNT® affiliate. "Research tells us Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the trauma and toxic stress of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness and poverty so prevalent in families involved with the child welfare system, have devastating lifelong health and emotional effects, but a strong, supportive family placement can mitigate the impact."

As more children are in family placements, Tennessee has reduced the percentage of children in custody who are housed in residential settings by nearly half since 2000. This progress is all the more impressive because the state is one of a very small number of states where data in this report includes both dependent, neglected children and children adjudicated delinquent. Nationally, the report finds 40 percent of the one in seven children in the child welfare system who are in group placements have no clinical or behavioral reason to be there.

- [Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT® Project, *Every Kid Needs a Family*: http://bit.ly/1LemcN2.](http://bit.ly/1LemcN2)

Youth Transitioning from Foster Care

As children in foster care who are unable to return to their homes of origin age, their likelihood for adoption drops, with only 30 percent of youth adopted after age 8

Beginning in 1999 with the *Chafee Foster to*

Independence Act, child welfare policy has acknowledged a responsibility for children in foster care after they reach legal adulthood at age 18. The Youth Transitions Advisory Council (YTAC), staffed by [Steve Petty](#) of TCCY, draws together stakeholders to make recommendations on post-custody services for youth in state custody who age out of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Tennessee was the first state in the nation to make comprehensive transition services available to all youth aging out of the state's child welfare and juvenile justice system custody. The percent of eligible youth receiving Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) is show in the YTAC table above. The report includes more information about transitioning youth and recommendations for improvement.

- Youth Transitions Advisory Council (YTAC): <http://www.tn.gov/tccy/ytac.shtml>;
- YTAC Annual Report, October 2014: <http://www.tn.gov/tccy/yt-ar-14.pdf>.

	Total Aged Out	Total Aged Out Eligible for EFCS	Eligible Population Accepting EFCS	Percent Accepting EFCS
FY 2008-09	1209			
FY 2009-10	1162			
FY 2010-11	1131	813	163	20%
FY 2011-12	1084	748	201	27%
FY 2012-13	1017	768	301	39%
FY 2013-14	984	779	312	40%

Kinship Care

A high priority recommendation in the *Every Kid Needs a Family* is for child welfare agencies to identify extended family members and provide them with the training, services and supports they need to care for their relatives. Familiar faces who already know and love children are often willing to open their homes but frequently need support, including financial help, to be able to do so.

Children are typically more satisfied, and outcomes are better, when they are placed with relatives, according to the [KIDS COUNT®](#) report. Federal mandates also require state welfare agencies to complete a diligent search for relatives when a family comes into contact with them.

- Child Welfare Information Gateway, "Kinship Care": <http://1.usa.gov/1GJAMMM>;
- Child Welfare League of American, "Kinship Care": <http://bit.ly/1F1c39D>;
- kidcentral tn, "Family-Sized Support": <http://bit.ly/1dAihPQ>.

Ombudsman for Children and Youth

In every system there are problems, complications and misunderstandings. When it comes to protecting children from maltreatment and assuring their safety, it is especially important to solve problems and address misunderstandings. The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth's (TCCY) Ombudsman Program is an external, third-party problem resolution mechanism for children in the custody of the Department of Children's Services (DCS), those receiving Child Protective Services (CPS) or kinship care/relative caregiver services and with DCS foster parent issues. TCCY has statutory authority to review children in the foster care system, kinship care or CPS and make recommendations for improvement. The Ombudsman Program has a mandate to investigate or conduct case file reviews but does not have an enforcement power. If necessary, written and/or verbal recommendations are provided. Transparency, fairness, accountability, timeliness and best practice are features safeguarded by the Ombudsman Program.

The TCCY ombudsman takes referrals from children, families, legislators, national organizations, child advocates, attorneys, school personnel, juvenile courts, DCS workers, service providers and other stakeholders or concerned individuals. The Ombudsman can access records and interview children, families and state and private agency staff, in order to help resolve problems. [Gerald Papica](#) is the TCCY ombudsman and may be contacted at (615) 532-1572.

- TCCY: www.tn.gov/tccy.

Foster Care Review Boards

TCCY is authorized to be involved with foster care review boards. Tennessee law (TCA 37-2-406) mandates cases of children in state custody be reviewed by juvenile courts within 90 days of entering custody and at least once every six months thereafter until they exit custody. Although juvenile court judges may review the cases, the preferred method is to form a foster care review board made up of community members. Most of the boards meet monthly and have from five to seven members. The members, who are appointed by Juvenile Court judges, may include a doctor, a lawyer, a staff member of a social service agency, a staff member of a mental health agency, a young adult (18 to 25 years old) and must include a parent of a minor child

Although boards are not required to review the cases of delinquent children in youth development centers, many boards do. Some counties maintain a separate board for youth in custody because of delinquency.

As a part of the agency's efforts to fulfill its legislative mandate and to advocate for children in care, TCCY staff members Susan Cope, Gerald Papica and Zanira Whitfield serve on local foster care review boards. Each board meets up to 12 times during the year, with most meetings lasting four hours. The majority of TCCY staff members participated on Davidson County Foster Care Review Boards. Davidson County Court staff compiled information on the boards during calendar year 2011, finding boards reviewed an average of 11 cases per meeting.

TCCY Commission member Audrey Taylor Gonzales worked with the juvenile court in Shelby County to create a foster care review board system. The juvenile court dedicated a Foster Care Review Board Center in honor of her work recruiting more than 170 volunteers.

- [Administrative Office of the Courts, "Foster Care Review Board Training," http://bit.ly/1JXM0yd.](http://bit.ly/1JXM0yd)

Federal Commission Meets in Memphis

The Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF) heard from representatives of the Tennessee departments of Children's Services and Health at its meeting in Memphis. The CECANF was created by the *Protect Our Kids Act of 2012* to develop a national strategy and recommendations for reducing child abuse and neglect fatalities. It has been holding meeting in states across the nation.

The CECANF is charged with making recommendations, including best practices for and barriers to preventing child abuse. DCS Commissioner Henry listed his departmental goals: creating a safety culture, supporting children's health and access to services, and helping find permanent homes. Presentations by other experts covered multidisciplinary

team approach to prevention, responses to children with drug exposure and enacting a safety culture, with participation by DCS and Department of Health officials.

- CECANF report on Tennessee public meeting: <http://1.usa.gov/1Hsnt4A>.

Updates



TCCY is pleased to welcome Natasha M. Smith as director of Operations and Special Projects. A graduate of the University of Tennessee Law School, Smith has been previously employed by the Department of Human Resources and the First Lady's Office in the White House. She is married and is the mother of two daughters.

Mark Your Calendar

- June 4, 1 p.m.-4 p.m., Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, TEIS and Signal Centers sponsor an **Early Childhood Support Services presentation**, Lee University, Higginbotham Building, 1120 N. Ocoee St., Cleveland. Free. Registration required.
- June 7-12, **Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Tennessee Outdoors Youth Summit (TOYS)**, Montgomery County Shooting Complex, Clarksville. To deepen high school students' appreciation for outdoor-related activities. Registration fee. Information: <http://news.tn.gov/node/13535>; registration form: <http://www.tn.gov/twra/events/toys.pdf>.
- June 9, 1 p.m.-4 p.m. EDT, Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, Chattanooga Autism Center and Siskin Children's Institute sponsor "**Transitioning from Early Intervention to School**," Siskin Children's Institute, 1101 Carter St., Chattanooga. Free. Register at <http://bit.ly/1HJNb1T>.
- June 12, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., **C.A.R.E.S. Community Mental Health and Wellness Fair**, Wesley United Methodist Church, 225 Princeton Road, Johnson City (Located off I-26 next to Washington County Health Department). Contact Jonathan Hartsell at Jonathan.Hartsell@va.gov, (423) 926-1171 ext. 7267
- June 10-13, **2015 Coalition for Juvenile Justice Annual Conference**, Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, DC. Registration fee. Register at <http://bit.ly/1vD4aRE>.
- June 16-18, Gundersen Child Protection Training Center event, "**When Words Matter: Emerging Issues in Forensic Interviewing**," Marriott Town Center, Charleston, WV. Info and registration: <http://bit.ly/1EtlTeL>. Fee; student discount.
- June 17-18, The Healing Center in conjunction with University of Tennessee-Memphis will host its 7th **National Suicide and the Black Church Conference** at the University of Tennessee-Memphis Health Science Center, 800 Madison Avenue, Memphis, 38163. Call (901) 370-HOPE (4673) for information.
- June 18, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., **Council on Children's Mental Health/Youth Transitions Advisory Council meeting**, Goodwill Industries, 1015 Herman St., Nashville. Info: (615) 532-3073 or Melissa.McGee@tn.gov.or Steve.Petty@tn.gov.
- June 19, 10:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m., **Tennessee Mental Health-Juvenile Justice Policy Academy Action Network meeting**, Knoxville. Topics: diversion, care coordination and community partnerships regarding juvenile-involved youth with behavioral health disorders. Lunch will be provided. Contact Keri Virgo, (615) 770-0462 or keri.virgo@tn.gov.

In the News

Lebanon Democrat, "Report recommends routes to help place children with families," <http://bit.ly/1ewRuUP>.
The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal, "New report: 17 percent of TN foster children placed in non-family settings":
<http://bit.ly/1ewVBjG>.
Public News Service, "Report: Family Care Raises Success Chances for Children": <http://bit.ly/1G7QUZZ>.

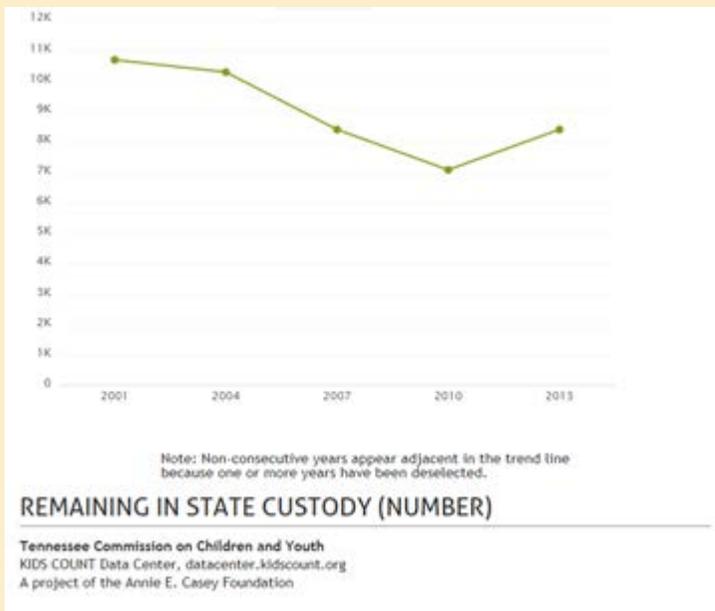
Research Information

National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2014*, <http://bit.ly/1bKQCde>.
Council of Economic Advisers, Domestic Policy Council, and Office of Management and Budget, *Opportunity for All: Fighting Rural Child Poverty*, <http://1.usa.gov/1cZKi2k>.

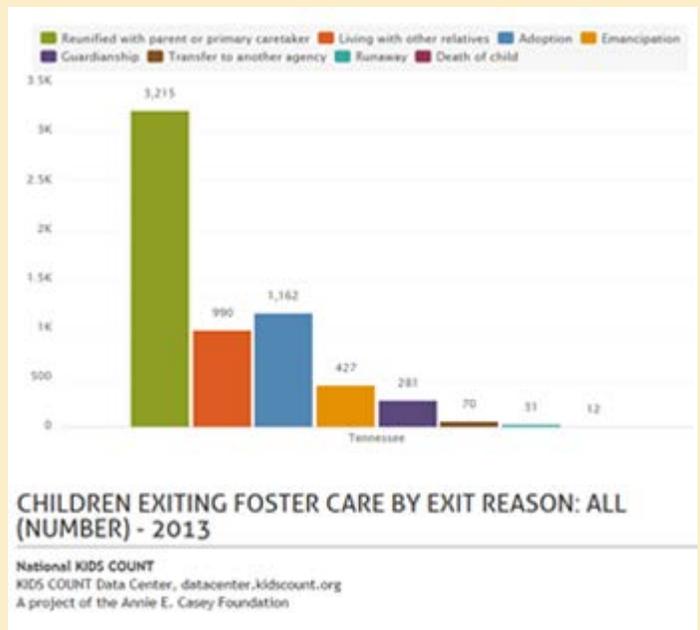
U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Projections": <http://1.usa.gov/1EI1GYD>.

Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts

Children Remaining in Custody



Reasons for Exiting Care



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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