



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

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Improving Outcomes for Children

Nashville — Despite the challenges of the recession, Tennessee has achieved another state best in the *National KIDS COUNT Data Book's* ranking on child well-being. Its ranking, 39th in the nation, was included in a report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The book also looks at how children have been affected by the recession.

“We celebrate Tennessee’s best ever ranking and first above the 40s as evidence that both public policies and public-private and state-local partnerships serving children are producing improved outcomes,” said Linda O’Neal, executive director of the state KIDS COUNT affiliate, the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.

Tennessee’s best ranking is its 9th place tie with 12 other states on the percent of teens ages 16 to 19 who are not in school and are not high school dropouts. A combination of encouragement on the part of the education system and good public policies contribute to this ranking. Policies include mandating school attendance until age 18 and linking eligibility for a driver’s license to school attendance.

“Research tells us trauma, maternal depression and other adverse experiences during early childhood negatively impact lifelong physical and mental health.

Brain research on very young children also verifies the importance of providing services that prevent adverse experiences and support children and their families enhances their prospects for success.”

The report recommends home visiting and other parenting support programs and expanded access to high-quality pre-K programs as important strategies for improving outcomes for young children. O’Neal said Tennessee’s high quality pre-K program is already improving outcomes for children. Quality pre-K is being recognized in some areas as an effective strategy to improve struggling schools.

Living in poverty has a negative impact on child well-being. The recession, which began in the previous decade, forced more families into poverty, many for the first time. Almost one in four children in Tennessee lived in poverty in 2009. The KIDS COUNT report focuses on the effect of foreclosure and parental unemployment on children. It includes recommendations for protecting children from the long-term effects of this temporary downturn.

“The Governor and the Tennessee General Assembly took an important step that supports families and children when they agreed to accept federal funding to extend unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed. This helps parents provide for their children and increases their security and hope for the future,” O’Neal said.

Tennessee continues to rank in the bottom 40 on six indicators: low-birthweight babies (41st); infant mortality (44th); teen deaths (42nd); births to teens age 15-19 (43rd); children in poverty (41st), and children without secure parental employment (44th). Many of these indicators are interrelated. Policies and strategies currently in place have the potential to improve birth outcomes and reduce teen deaths from accidents, homicide and suicide, the leading causes of teen deaths.

More state-specific information about child well-being and the success of Tennessee programs to improve outcomes is available in the recently released *KIDS COUNT: The State of the Child in Tennessee 2010*, published by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, www.tennessee.gov/tccy/kc-soc10.shtml.

Data from both the 22nd annual *Data Book* and the state book is also available from the expanded KIDS COUNT Data Center, which contains hundreds of measures of child well-being and allows users to create maps and graphs of the data at the national, state, county and city level. To access information for Tennessee, go to <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/tn>. This year, the Data Center has been enhanced by a new, user-friendly mobile site, accessible at <http://mobile.kidscount.org>.

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth is an independent state agency created by the Tennessee General Assembly. Its primary mission is to advocate for improvements in the quality of life for Tennessee children and families. Partial funding for TCCY's KIDS COUNT program is provided through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to disadvantaged children.

For more information, contact (615) 741-2633, access TCCY's website at www.tn.gov/tccy or follow www.facebook.com/TCCYonfb and www.twitter.com/@tccy.

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