

Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement

2024-2025

Dedication

The Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement proudly dedicates this report to the Faith-Based and community organizations across Tennessee whose unwavering commitment uplifts the health and well-being of individuals and families. From the largest cities to the most rural communities, these partners serve with compassion and purpose, addressing the barriers, economic hardships, and challenges that impact access to care, health resources, and overall wellness, shaping the lives of countless Tennesseans.

We also honor the pastors, faith leaders, and ministry leaders, nonprofit staff, and volunteers who consistently show up for their communities—bringing education, support, and care to those who need it most. Their dedication, perseverance, and faith in action embody the mission of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement, building bridges between faith, community, and public health.

This report stands as a testament to their efforts and the collective impact of faith and community working together. To all who work tirelessly to improve health and strengthen communities across Tennessee—this work, and this report, are for you. Your dedication inspires continued partnership and progress toward improving health outcomes and advancing well-being for all Tennesseans.

Contributors

KeiAndra Harper

Governor's Management Fellow, Customer Focused Government

Tamara Chavez-Lindell, PhD, MPH

Lead Epidemiologist, Division of Health Disparities Elimination

Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement Team

LaShan Dixon, MS, GCHCM, GCG

Director

Schacona L. Johnson

Administrative Services Assistant

Anika Brown

Community Outreach Worker

Katherine Diaz, DrPH, MPH

Community Outreach Worker

Bethsahida Harrigan, MPH

Community Engagement Coordinator

Tiffany Tutko, MPH

Community Outreach Worker

Table of Contents

- Dedication 2
- Contributors..... 3
- Table of Contents 4
- Introduction 5
- Executive Summary 6
- Tennessee Health Disparities Advisory Group..... 7
- Community Outreach..... 8
- Community Outreach: Meeting the Need 9
- Community Outreach Focus Areas 11
- Community Health Initiatives Sponsorship Program..... 15
- References..... 18

Introduction

The **Division of Health Disparities Elimination (DHDE)** serves as the Tennessee Department of Health’s coordinating body for programs that eliminate barriers to care and advance health equity. DHDE unites three offices—the Office of Minority Health, the State Office of Rural Health, and the Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement—to align outreach, training, and policy initiatives through a shared health equity lens. The division’s work spans statewide health excellence training, expansion of healthcare access in rural communities, and faith-based and community-based engagement to address the social and environmental drivers of health.

Within DHDE, the **Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement (OFBCE)** works to strengthen partnerships with faith communities and community-based organizations to advance health excellence and eliminate disparities across the state. As part of the Division of Health Disparities Elimination, the office recognizes that faith communities serve as trusted messengers and vital connectors for health education, prevention, and access to care.

Grounded in the Department’s mission to “engage and connect populations to care, services, and resources to drive the elimination of health disparities,” the OFBCE builds bridges between public health initiatives and trusted local partners. By collaborating with faith-based leaders, the office helps identify emerging community health needs, promote preventive care, and create pathways for sustained engagement within congregations of all sizes and traditions.

The Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement’s 2025 Impact Report highlights the transformative effect of faith and community collaboration in public health. By engaging trusted partners, empowering local leadership, and addressing social drivers of health, the office continues to strengthen Tennessee’s foundation for equitable, sustainable wellness. OFBCE’s work unites compassion, data, and partnership to build healthier communities across the state.

Executive Summary

The Office of Faith-Based and Community Engagement (OFBCE), within the Tennessee Department of Health's Division of Health Disparities Elimination (DHDE), continues to advance health equity through trusted partnerships with faith and community organizations statewide. Through community outreach and convenings such as the Tennessee Health Disparities Advisory Group, OFBCE has served as a leader in connecting people with resources within our state. In FY25, OFBCE expanded its impact to **612 community events across 59 counties** through collaborations with churches, nonprofits, and civic leaders. OFBCE addressed key health priorities, emphasizing four key focus areas:

- **Child and Maternal Health**
- **Immigrant and Refugee Health**
- **Hispanic and Latino Populations**
- **HIV and Aids Awareness**

Our Community Outreach Workers partnered with over sixty organizations and houses of worship in FY25. OFBCE has convened state leaders and partners over fifty times through collaborative sessions such as the Health Disparities Advisory Group and the Immigrant and Refugee Alliance.

Major initiatives like the Community Health Initiatives Sponsorship Program (CHISP) invested over \$400,000 in grassroots projects, **helping 94% of partners strengthen their organizational capacity for future community health needs.** By connecting state resources with faith-based networks, OFBCE demonstrates the power of collective action by building trust, promoting health literacy, and ensuring equitable access to care for all Tennesseans. CHISP served 9,818 people across Tennessee. Projects supported topics including mental health, chronic disease prevention, youth wellness, and culturally tailored health education—demonstrating measurable progress toward health equity.

Tennessee Health Disparities Advisory Group

The Tennessee Health Disparities Advisory Group (TN HDAG) addresses the disproportionate prevalence and incidence of chronic diseases, mental health, infectious diseases, and environmental injustices occurring among individuals of minority and vulnerable communities. Members include individuals from community and faith-based organizations, academia, health care providers, and public health officials who examine data, monitor trends, and generate responsive solutions to these challenges.

Our Purpose:

The Tennessee Health Disparities Advisory Group convenes individuals across the state to fulfill its purpose, which is to:

- Encourage collaboration and partnership
- Increase trust and transparency
- Create a platform for bi-directional communication
- Reduce fragmentation relative to outreach and engagement efforts

A Year of Collaboration

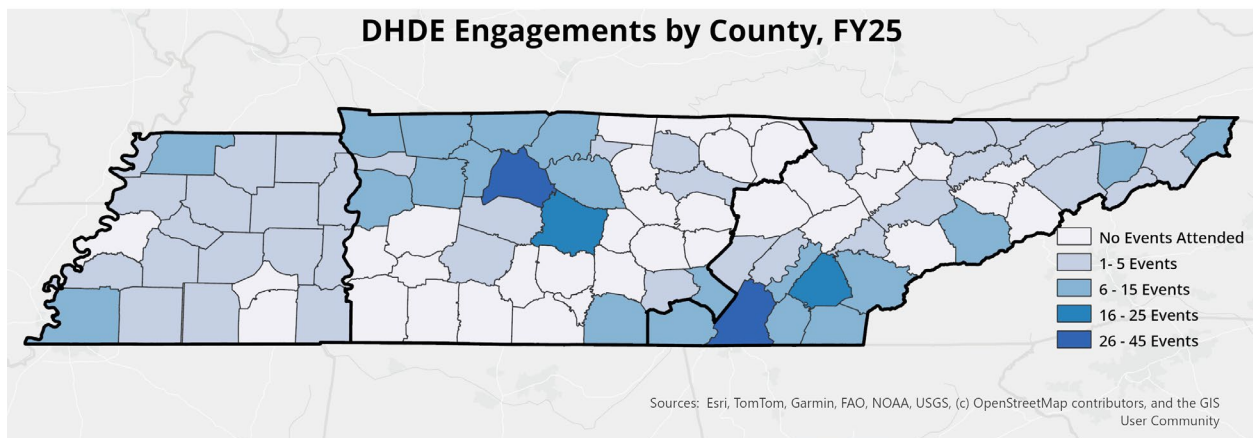
- OFBCE hosted 45 TN HDAG meetings in FY25.
- On average, weekly TN HDAG meetings had 50 participants.
- TN HDAG provided a platform for over 20 Tennessee Department of Health programs to be shared with the community.

In March of 2025, TN HDAG boasted its highest meeting attendance of the Year. One hundred and eleven participants joined to hear about “Faith and Housing” from leaders of Tennessee’s Livability Collaborative.

Community Outreach

Our Community Outreach Workers engage communities across the state by building relationships with organizations that support our focus areas. They do this by supporting and uplifting faith communities and providing TDH resources for community outreach events. Our community outreach workers identify the specific needs of various communities and work to engage partners, providing information about underutilized programs and resources throughout the state. Their engagements are the primary way that DHDE interacts with communities across the state.

The map below shows DHDE staff's direct engagement during FY25 and highlights where staff members most frequently engaged with communities. The events accounted for in the map include partnership meetings, health fairs, in-person presentations, and other community events. This map does not include statewide or virtual events such as webinars and online presentations. The map represents only a portion of the total community events held across the state each year.



- DHDE staff engaged in a total of 612 events in FY25.
- DHDE staff attended events in 59 counties.
- We increased engagement from FY24 by 290%. *

*This increase is reflective not only of increased engagement across the state, but also of improved systems of tracking within DHDE and OFBCE.

Community Outreach: Meeting the Need

OFBCE's Community Outreach Initiatives are aligned with DHDE's Community Engagement and Disparities Reduction priority work areas and effectively address the following recommendations from the 2024 Health Disparities Report:

Health Equity and Social Drivers

- Encourage community organizations to participate in County Health Council planning to address local challenges.

Healthy Life Expectancy

- Disseminate culturally appropriate health education materials on chronic diseases, nutrition, and mental health.

Cancer

- Coordinate with outreach workers and partners to promote risk factor assessments, including lifestyle and family history.

Vulnerable Populations

- Conduct outreach to vulnerable populations with culturally and linguistically appropriate health promotion materials.
- Expand collaboration with community services to offer clinical health assessments at health fairs and mobile clinics, and refer individuals to low-cost or subsidized healthcare as needed

Needs of the Faith Community

OFBCE conducted a Gifts & Needs Survey in 2024 that helped identify the needs of Tennessee's Faith Communities. The survey results from 60 respondents aligned with DHDE's priority work areas and highlighted areas where OFBCE can meet the needs of Faith Communities.

- 20% of respondents to our 2024 Gifts & Needs survey reported that their faith community would benefit from **cultural or language support**, with Spanish being the most frequently mentioned language need.
- 40% of faith communities want to provide **health screenings**.
- 40% of faith communities want to provide **Health Education Workshops**.
- 20% of the surveyed faith communities are interested in **hosting health events**, and 33% are interested in partnering with others to host health events.

Our Impact

OFBCE's community outreach initiatives help meet the needs of Tennessee's most vulnerable communities by building partnerships, providing resources, and increasing awareness around the ways in which TDH can support the efforts of community and faith-based initiatives. In FY25, OFBCE concentrated our outreach on partnering, serving, and supporting our networks in four focus areas: HIV and AIDS, Maternal and Child Health, Immigrants and Refugees, and Hispanic and Latino populations. You can read more about our focus areas in the following pages.

Partnership

- Eight churches partnered with OFBCE to host HIV screening and education events across the state.
- OFBCE partnered with more than 50 churches and organizations serving Hispanic and Latino populations across the state.

Service

- Over 40 Latina Women were provided access to information and/or screening opportunities related to breast cancer.
- One hundred and fifty families were served at our second annual Family Day.

Support Network

- Seventy-six percent of surveyed members report that TN Health Immigrant and Refugee Alliance (THIRA) meetings are helpful to their work.
- Forty-one percent of surveyed THIRA members agree the Alliance helped them form new partnerships.

Community Outreach Focus Areas

Child and Maternal Health

Key Events

The primary events within this focus area are activities tailored towards the health of children and families. This includes community baby showers, back-to-school bashes, and other family-oriented events. In Marion and Sequatchie County, efforts to connect with faith-based organizations have been instrumental, as these trusted partners help gather feedback, enhance support, and foster greater community engagement. Community events have created valuable opportunities for community members to share their health challenges and express their needs.

Highlights

One of FY25's most successful engagements was our second annual Family Day. This event was a collaborative partnership among several faith-based organizations in McMinn County to create a welcoming day where the community shows up for all. The event had **over 150 families in attendance**. The families received back-to-school supplies, vision and dental screenings, produce giveaways, and health and human resources from local agencies showing support.



Hispanic and Latino Populations

Key Events

The key events and services within this focus area include hosting calls with community and faith leaders and providing bilingual communications related to TDH events and other healthcare resources.

Highlights

In partnership with Iglesia Ministerio de Reconciliación Internacional, a Hispanic church located in Memphis, TN, we organized the church's inaugural breast cancer awareness workshop tailored specifically for Latina women. This collaboration was crucial in reaching approximately 30 women, educating them on vital topics related to breast and cervical cancer, such as symptoms, risk factors, and the significance of early detection. We connected church leadership with Dr. Marianelly Ramirez, an experienced health educator from the Tennessee Breast and Cervical Screening Program (TBCSP), and promoted the event through other Memphis churches and community organizations to enhance outreach.

We coordinated a health fair with Iglesia de Dios Transformación in Chattanooga, targeting the local Hispanic community. This event underscored our collective commitment to improving health access and awareness. We focused on key contributions by supporting the logistics and outreach efforts necessary for a successful event, securing sponsorships to provide essential food and water for participants, and facilitating access to free mammograms, allowing 13 women to overcome barriers to preventive care.



Immigrant and Refugee Health

Key Event

The primary event within this focus area is the monthly TN Health Immigrant and Refugee Alliance (THIRA). The Alliance has seen **over 110 participants** in FY25, including community advocates and representatives from faith-based organizations, non-profits, and state government.

Highlights

OFBCE's Community Engagement Coordinator, Bethsy Harrigan, was asked to be on a panel for the "Practicing Cultural Humility in Community Health: Insights for CHWs" panel at the 2024 TCCN (TN Charitable Clinic Network) Annual Conference on September 5, 2024, at the Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro, TN. She spoke about the TN Health Immigrant and Refugee Alliance and her role as a Community Engagement Coordinator focusing on immigrants and refugees statewide. She sat on the panel alongside community health workers at Siloam Health and Vanderbilt University Medical Center, as well as the Director of Health Equity at Health Leads. Roughly **30 conference members** attended the session and were able to engage with the panel.



HIV and AIDS Awareness

Key Events

Within this focus area, OFBCE organizes health symposia and informational sessions about HIV across the state. These events often provide free HIV testing and emphasize the crucial need for awareness and accessibility in our communities. Additionally, OFBCE is working to connect faith-based organizations with the Minority AIDS Initiative to enhance involvement and collaboration. This ongoing effort aims to strengthen our community's response to HIV by integrating faith-based perspectives and support systems.

Highlights

A key highlight of these sessions was our ability to share vital information and debunk common myths surrounding HIV, fostering a supportive environment for discussion and education. Participants engaged positively, and we captured some powerful moments through photographs and stories, showcasing the impact of our outreach efforts.

Through these events, community members with new or existing HIV diagnoses were able to be connected to care and resources to support their health.



Community Health Initiatives Sponsorship Program

The Community Health Initiatives Sponsorship Program (CHISP) supported events and initiatives that address health disparities with the goal of promoting health, preventing disease, and advancing health for all underserved communities. Applicants could request up to \$20,000, and we received 89 applications. The program provided funding to 19 awardees across Tennessee from community-based, faith-based, and coalition organizations. The sponsorship events and initiatives were held between May 20 and June 30, 2025.

- \$400, 789.66 were invested in CHISP events.
- CHISP events served 9,818 people across Tennessee.
- Nineteen community partners were awarded.
- Over sixty events were hosted by our partners

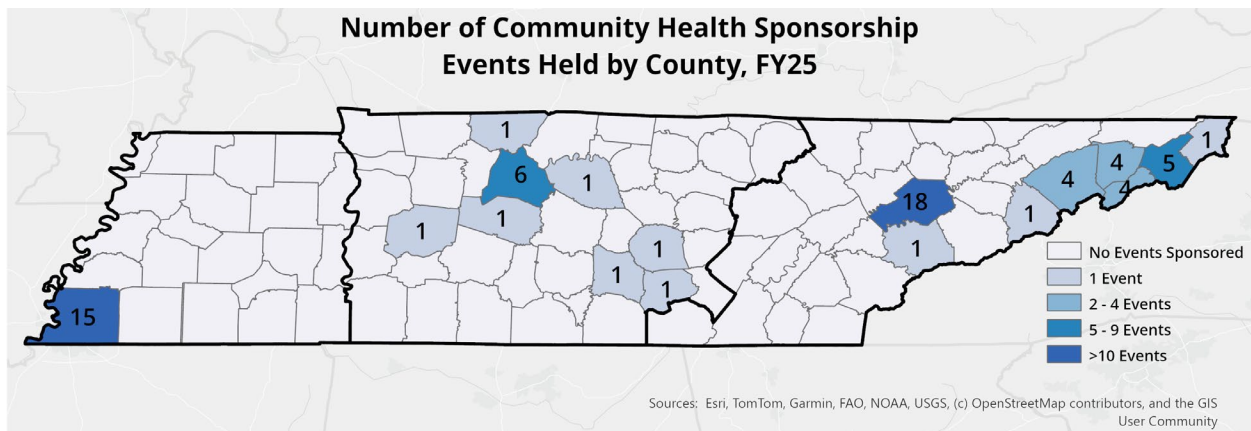
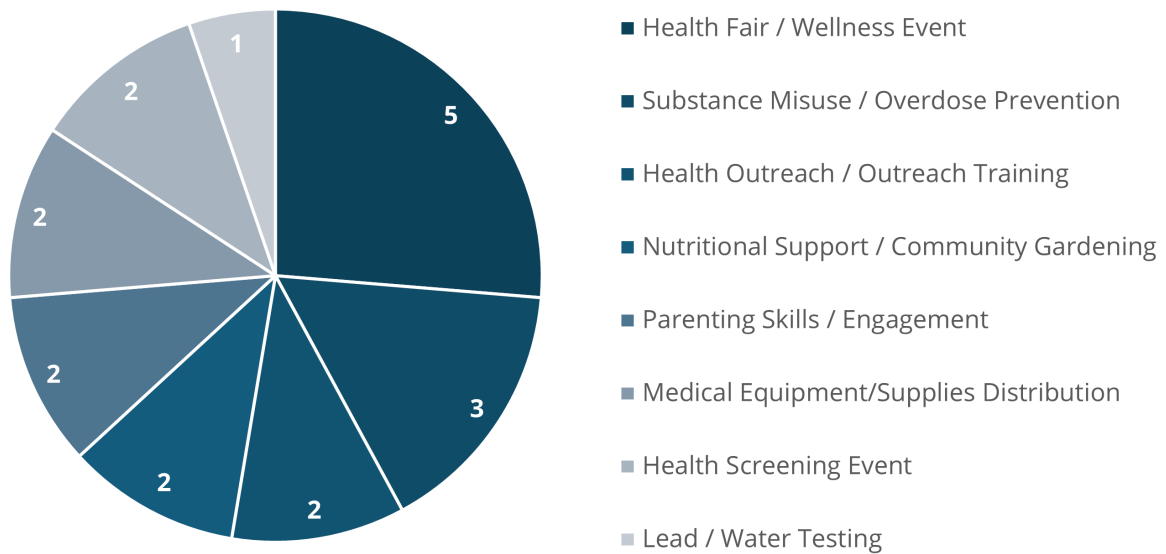
CHISP Partners

- Amputee Blade Runners
- Center of Hope for Behavioral Health
- Charis Health Center
- Chase Away Fentanyl
- Creative Girls Rock
- Daughters of Zion
- Hope House Day Care Center
- Hustle Recovery
- HWY 232 South Church of Christ
- Inspiritus, Inc
- Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee
- Methodist Le Bonheur Outreach
- Nashville International Center for Empowerment
- New Direction Health Care Solution
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee
- Street Works
- Tennessee Foster Adoptive Care Association
- Tennessee Kidney Foundation
- University of Tennessee Health Science Center

From Memphis to Mountain City

Over the course of 41 days, each of the 19 sponsored organizations hosted events in one of eight categories. Many partners hosted the same event multiple times to maximize the impact within their communities. These events spanned the entire state, from the lower west corner of Shelby County to the Northeast corner of the state in Johnson County. The chart below shows the number of sponsored organizations in each event category, and the map shows the number of events in each Tennessee County.

Event Categories and Number of Sponsored Organizations in Each Category, FY25



Impacts

At the conclusion of the Community Health Initiatives Sponsorship Program, we surveyed recipients about the impact of the sponsorship and event on their organization. Seventeen of the nineteen awardees responded. The results indicate that CHISP helped organizations expand their reach and serve their intended communities.

- Eighty-three percent of organizations **partnered with one or more organizations** to implement their event.
- Sixty percent of respondents reported this initiative helped **expand the population they serve**.
- Ninety-four percent reported **improved organizational capacity** to respond to future community health needs.
- Thirty-five percent of respondents reported they were able to direct their efforts to **include a new population**.
- Seventy-two percent of respondents rated their **outreach to intended communities** “extremely successful.”
- Sixty-seven percent of respondents rated the program “extremely effective” in **reaching program goals**.



References

Tennessee Department of Health. (n.d.). Tennessee Livability Collaborative overview. Tennessee Department of Health.

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/program-areas/primary-prevention/TN%20Livability%20Collaborative%20Overview.pdf>

Tennessee Department of Health, Division of Health Disparities Elimination. (2024, May). Health disparities in Tennessee 2024 (HD_Report_FINAL_06122024).

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/program-areas/division-of-health-disparities-elimination/documents/HD_Report_FINAL_06122024.pdf



Dept. of Health, Authorization # N84DN70-1,
electronic only, April 1, 2026. This public document
was promulgated at a cost of \$Electronic per copy.