



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

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August 30, 2019

The Honorable Bill Lee, Governor  
Tennessee State Capitol  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

RE: TCCY Budget Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Dear Governor Lee:

Tennessee Code Annotated Section 37-3-103(a)(1)(B), includes the following statutory duty for the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY):

On or before September 1 of each year, make recommendations for the state budget for the following fiscal year regarding services for children and youth and submit the recommendations to the governor, the finance, ways and means committee of the senate, the finance, ways and means committee of the house of representatives, the legislative office of budget analysis, and the affected state departments.

The Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide recommendations for the FY 2020-2021 state budget as we have for over 20 years. Over the past two decades, Tennessee has created public-private and state-local partnerships to implement essential "infrastructure" services for children and families – basic public supports developed in our child welfare, education, health, human services, juvenile justice, mental health and disability services systems. These services and supports are interrelated, so weakening public structure resources in one system erodes the strength of the foundation in all systems.

Good public policies and strategic investments in public structures have led to improved outcomes for Tennessee children. The 2019 Annie E. Casey Foundation *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released in June showed Tennessee ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in child well-being, slightly lower than the state's best ever ranking of 35<sup>th</sup> from the previous two years.

The 2019 Report includes 16 indicators in four domains: Health, Education, Economic Well-Being, and Family and Community, with each domain separately ranked. Tennessee continues to show steady, incremental improvements in many individual indicators. **A copy of the 2019 KIDS COUNT Profile for Tennessee is attached for your information.**

*The KIDS COUNT Data Book* highlighted the need for more concerted efforts in Tennessee to continue improvements in Education, Economic Well-Being, and Family and Community indicators. Slightly more than one in five Tennessee children lives in poverty (23%), one in six (13%) in a high-poverty area, more than one in four in a family with a high housing cost burden (27%) or in a family where parents do not have secure employment (28%), and more than one-third in single-parent families (37%). Poverty, unemployment and living in high poverty communities, often due to a lack of affordable housing, can create toxic stress for children and families and insecure, unstable homes, making it difficult for children to thrive or have access to opportunities to create successful life outcomes.

We appreciate the funding and continued support provided in the FY 2019-2020 budget for prevention and mitigation of adverse childhood experiences of \$2.45 million. Tennessee continues to lead the nation in efforts to address adverse childhood experiences and to ultimately become a trauma-informed state through Building Strong Brains Tennessee. Former Deputy Governor Jim Henry recently testified in Congress about the strategies of Building Strong Brains Tennessee and the accomplishments Tennessee is seeing.

In FY 2020, ACEs Innovation Grants are supporting 24 new or continuing programs across a wide range of sectors, including medical, education, mental health, juvenile justice and early childhood education in all regions of the state. TCCY staff trained 174 people across the state in FY 2019 to provide training to others in their own agency, program or community so ACEs prevention and mitigation can be fully integrated into services provided to children and families. TCCY currently has three Building Strong Brains Tennessee training-for-trainers learning events scheduled during this fiscal year. Given your priority of an increased rural focus, these learning opportunities are scheduled to be held in Madison, Grundy and Blount Counties. Over the past four fiscal years, TCCY has trained 972 trainers from all over the state.

The Commission appreciates your continued support for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) in Tennessee. Funding for three new county CASA programs was included in the current year budget, bringing the number of state funded county CASAs to 59. We also appreciate the recurring funding provided to TN CASA to support development, expansion, training and quality assurance efforts as they continue to strive to provide a CASA volunteer for every child who needs one. CASA volunteers assist in moving cases toward permanency, reducing the time children linger in state custody. This plays a significant role in reducing the number of children in DCS custody overall. CASA grants are monitored by and flow through the

TCCY budget. TN CASA and TCCY anticipate funding for at least three new counties will be needed for FY2020-2021.

**The Commission also appreciates the significant funding provided in the FY2019-2020 budget to improve school security. TCCY has advocated for schools to employ only Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) commission certified school resource officers to provide school security.** School resource officers receive additional training to work with youth in an educational setting. These funds are greatly needed to support rural, less populated counties, with limited fiscal capacity to fund POST certified school resource officers. Some of these counties sought, out of a sense of urgency, to arm teachers or other school personnel, use off-duty officers or even volunteers to address their security needs. All students in every school deserve to learn in a safe, secure environment.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among children age 10 to 19, and a rising cause of death for children under 10. Suicide is also a leading cause of death among the state's veterans and farmers, affecting the lives of many other children and families. We appreciate the additional resources provided to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network to create a regional presence across the state to prevent, reduce and help communities deal with the aftermath of suicide.

TCCY also appreciates the continued and increased support for "zero to three" courts around the state to intervene and break the cycle of abuse and neglect experienced by so many families in Tennessee. Zero to three baby courts work with families with young children to improve family functioning and reduce the need to remove children from their homes. When removal can't be avoided, zero to three baby courts enable children to move more quickly toward permanency and a more stable family environment.

Sincerely,



Brenda Davis  
Commission Chair



Richard Kennedy  
Executive Director

cc: Stuart McWhorter, Commissioner, Department of Finance and Administration  
Jennifer Nichols, Commissioner, Department of Children's Services  
Penny Schwinn, Commissioner, Department of Education  
Lisa Piercey, Commissioner, Department of Health  
Danielle Barnes, Commissioner, Department of Human Services  
Marie Williams, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
Gabe Roberts, Commissioner, Bureau of TennCare  
Deborah Taylor Tate, Administrative Director, Administrative Office of the Courts  
David Thurman, Budget Director, Department of Finance and Administration  
The Honorable Randy McNally, Lieutenant Governor  
The Honorable Cameron Sexton, Speaker, Tennessee House of Representatives  
Members of the Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee  
Members of the House Finance, Ways and Means Committee  
Members of the 111<sup>th</sup> Tennessee General Assembly  
Legislative Office of Budget Analysis

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## 32 ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Rank

	UNITED STATES	TENNESSEE
<b>CHILDREN IN POVERTY</b> US: 13,353,000   TN: 315,000	22% 2010	26% 2010
	18% 2017 BETTER	21% 2017 BETTER
<b>CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS LACK SECURE EMPLOYMENT</b> US: 20,075,000   TN: 426,000	33% 2010	37% 2010
	27% 2017 BETTER	28% 2017 BETTER
<b>CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH A HIGH HOUSING COST BURDEN</b> US: 22,908,000   TN: 406,000	41% 2010	37% 2010
	31% 2017 BETTER	27% 2017 BETTER
<b>TEENS NOT IN SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING</b> US: 1,171,000   TN: 27,000	9% 2010	10% 2010
	7% 2017 BETTER	7% 2017 BETTER

## 33 EDUCATION

Rank

	UNITED STATES	TENNESSEE
<b>YOUNG CHILDREN (AGES 3 AND 4) NOT IN SCHOOL</b> US: 4,223,000   TN: 100,000	52% 2009-11	59% 2009-11
	52% 2015-17 SAME	61% 2015-17 WORSE
<b>FOURTH-GRADERS NOT PROFICIENT IN READING</b> US: N.A.   TN: N.A.	68% 2009	72% 2009
	65% 2017 BETTER	67% 2017 BETTER
<b>EIGHTH-GRADERS NOT PROFICIENT IN MATH</b> US: N.A.   TN: N.A.	67% 2009	75% 2009
	67% 2017 SAME	70% 2017 BETTER
<b>HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NOT GRADUATING ON TIME</b> US: N.A.   TN: N.A.	21% 2010-11	14% 2010-11
	15% 2016-17 BETTER	10% 2016-17 BETTER

## 33 HEALTH

Rank

	UNITED STATES	TENNESSEE
<b>LOW BIRTH-WEIGHT BABIES</b> US: 318,873   TN: 7,409	8.1% 2010	8.3% 2017 WORSE
		9.0% 2010
		9.2% 2017 WORSE
<b>CHILDREN WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE</b> US: 3,925,000   TN: 71,000	8% 2010	5% 2017 BETTER
		6% 2010
		4% 2017 BETTER
<b>CHILD AND TEEN DEATHS PER 100,000</b> US: 20,337   TN: 543	26 2010	26 2017 SAME
		31 2010
		34 2017 WORSE
<b>TEENS WHO ABUSE ALCOHOL OR DRUGS</b> US: 1,028,000   TN: 20,000	5% 2015-16	4% 2016-17 BETTER
		4% 2015-16
		4% 2016-17 SAME

## 39 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Rank

	UNITED STATES	TENNESSEE
<b>CHILDREN IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES</b> US: 24,001,000   TN: 522,000	34% 2010	34% 2017 SAME
		37% 2010
		37% 2017 SAME
<b>CHILDREN IN FAMILIES WHERE THE HOUSEHOLD HEAD LACKS A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA</b> US: 9,557,000   TN: 166,000	15% 2010	13% 2017 BETTER
		13% 2010
		11% 2017 BETTER
<b>CHILDREN LIVING IN HIGH-POVERTY AREAS</b> US: 8,545,000   TN: 200,000	13% 2008-12	12% 2013-17 BETTER
		14% 2008-12
		13% 2013-17 BETTER
<b>TEEN BIRTHS PER 1,000</b> US: 194,377   TN: 5,516	34 2010	19 2017 BETTER
		43 2010
		27 2017 BETTER



# Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Budget Recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly



## Census 2020

**Set up a state complete count committee.** Complete count committees are made up of volunteers from tribal, state and local governments and community leaders or organizations to motivate residents to respond to the 2020 Census.

Spending on Tennessee children is highly reliant on federal funds allocated based on census data. The largest affected children's programs are: Medicaid/CHIP, SNAP, Pell grants, school lunch and breakfast, TANF, Section 8 housing, Title I and special education funds, Head Start, WIC, foster care, child care and adoption assistance.

### Governor's Priorities

- ✓ Transformation of rural Tennessee
- ✓ Early childhood literacy
- ✓ Strengthening career and technical education

## Early Childhood

**Greater resources are needed to make evidence-based home visiting available to every eligible family in the state.** TCCY applauds the additional \$1 million in non-recurring funding for evidence-based home visiting, to be used to secure services for children and families in Knox and Sullivan Counties. **The \$1 million must be moved to recurring in order to ensure there is not a loss of home visiting services to these families.**

**Increase availability of high quality pre-K classrooms.** Early childhood education is a wise public investment with a solid return of \$7 for every \$1 spent. While Tennessee continues to improve the quality of pre-K classrooms, we need to increase access. Tennessee currently serves less than 40 percent of prioritized children.

**Increase affordability of and accessibility to quality childcare.** Working families need access to affordable, quality childcare if they are to be reliable employees. Quality childcare also provides important opportunities to help children develop the cognitive, social and emotional competencies needed to succeed in school.

### Governor's Priorities

- ✓ Early childhood literacy
- ✓ Tackling the opioid epidemic
- ✓ Improving public safety

## K-12 Education

**Increase integration of mental health and substance abuse services through expansion of trauma-informed schools and school-based mental health programs.** Both the Departments of Education and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services support programs to provide mental health services in schools, but many students across the state still lack access to supportive school climates and appropriate services. Rural counties are especially impacted by a lack of providers.

**Increase funding for school social workers.** Research indicates 20 percent of students have mental health issues significant enough to cause impairment to major life functions. Though students with disabilities, students of color and students from low-income families are more likely to experience poor outcomes when facing these challenges, they are less likely to receive the appropriate services.

**Increase funding for Family Resource Centers (FRCs).** FRCs are important state-local, often public-private, partnerships working to improve education opportunities and achievement among at-risk students and their families. The state funds 102 FRCs in 78 of its 142 school districts. Existing FRCs are severely underfunded, and several districts continue to express interest in developing FRCs if funding were available.

**Increase funding for Coordinated School Health (CSH) and for school nurses.** CSH is instrumental in improving student physical activity, promoting good health for students and staff, and improving school climate. Nurses are also needed on site to care for increasing numbers of children with complex health needs.

**Fund afterschool programming.** Hardworking families across Tennessee rely on afterschool and summer learning programs to help kids succeed and help parents keep their jobs. More than three quarters of Tennessee parents say afterschool programs help kids gain workforce skills and help working parents keep their jobs.

### Governor's Priorities

- ✓ Tackling the opioid epidemic
- ✓ Early childhood literacy
- ✓ Transformation of rural Tennessee
- ✓ Strengthening career and technical education
- ✓ Improving public safety

## Child Welfare

**Increase placement resources at all levels of care.** To safely reduce custody numbers, DCS must have placement resources available to move children out of higher levels and into lower levels of care. As their treatment needs are met, children can return home or achieve permanency in an alternative family arrangement.

**Implement the recommendations of the Children's Justice Task Force.** Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) need additional funding to support the cost of hiring and training forensic interviewers to assist in the investigation of child sexual abuse as recommended by the Task Force. They also recommend additional CAC staff training around sex education and sexual abuse in all programs working with children.

### Governor's Priorities

- ✓ Improving public safety
- ✓ Establishment of the Office of Faith Based & Community Initiatives

## Juvenile Justice

**Implement the recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Data Review Team.** Significant resources are needed to implement the data development requirements of the legislation, including both software development and hardware acquisition in Juvenile Courts all across the state, and especially in rural counties.

**Fund implementation of validated risk and needs assessments for use by juvenile courts to assess best placement options.** Detaining youth who are not a risk to the community and do not need to be placed in detention is harmful and increases the likelihood of them being detained in the future, including as adults.

**Fund legal representation of youth in juvenile court.** Youth are often placed in detention or removed from their homes because they are not receiving adequate representation in the legal system.

**Fund training for judges, juvenile court staff, law enforcement, DCS staff and schools on provisions of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act.**

**Fund development of evidence-informed community-based alternatives to detention with an increased array of services for youth adjudicated delinquent.**

**Fund more Level III placements to provide step down programs for those exiting Youth Development Centers.**

### Governor's Priorities

- ✓ Improving public safety
- ✓ Establishment of the Office of Faith Based & Community Initiatives
- ✓ Criminal justice reform
- ✓ Transformation of rural Tennessee

## Transition-Age Youth

**Expand eligibility for extension of foster care services to youth working at least 80 hours per month or participating in activities to prepare for work.** Current law allows DCS to expand services to this category of young adults, but budget limitations have prevented DCS from implementing the change. Funding for the services are IV-E eligible, meaning each state dollar spent would receive significant matching federal funds. Former foster youth are at risk of losing academic eligibility. As long as they are employed part-time, extension of foster care services may help them complete their education objectives after their academic eligibility is restored.

### Governor's Priorities

- ✓ Strengthening career and technical education

## Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

**Sustainable funding to implement and expand System of Care Across TN (SOCAT) statewide to provide child-focused, family-driven, community-based mental health services to Tennessee children in every county.** A system of care is a spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with or at risk for mental health or other challenges and their families. It is organized into a coordinated network, builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs in order to help them function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.

### Governor's Priorities

- ✓ Tackling the opioid epidemic
- ✓ Establishment of the Office of Faith Based & Community Initiatives

Tennessee Code Annotated Section 37-3-103(a)(1)(B), includes the following statutory duty for the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY): On or before September 1 of each year, make recommendations for the state budget for the following fiscal year regarding services for children and youth and submit the recommendations to the governor, the finance, ways and means committee of the senate, the finance, ways and means committee of the house of representatives, the legislative office of budget analysis, and the affected state departments.

**Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth  
Budget Recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly**

**1) 2020 Census**

**Tennessee should create a Complete Count Committee to elicit and encourage participation in the 2020 Census.** Young children are undercounted at a higher rate than any other age group, and the undercount is most pronounced among low-income children and children of color. There are several reasons children are undercounted, and Complete Count Committees can utilize local knowledge and expertise to increase the self-response rate. Some children are undercounted because they have complex living conditions. They may be homeless or living in someone else's home temporarily. Other children are undercounted because not all of the family members are included on the response form. Still other children live in harder-to-count census tracts. In Tennessee, 19 percent of children live in census tracts with low response rates. This number could increase in 2020 as this census will be the first conducted primarily online. Lack of access to broadband in many rural parts of the state could make those tracts more difficult to count than in the past.

**Having an accurate census count is critically important to Tennessee children and the state budget.** The 2020 Census will determine not only apportionment of seats in Congress, but also the amount of funding each state will receive for about 300 different programs over the next decade. Many of these programs provide services to children, such as TennCare, the state's Medicaid program, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), special education, the school lunch program, Head Start, foster care assistance and the Child Care and Development Fund among others. An undercount of Tennessee children will lead to less federal funding for these and other critical programs available to the state's children with the greatest need. **State leaders should make efforts to promote participation and encourage all Tennesseans to submit their responses.**

Tennessee has historically been and will continue to be heavily reliant on federal funds to provide the essential services and supports for our children to thrive and prosper. In FY 2018, based on data submitted from state departments and agencies to TCCY's Resource Mapping Project, federal expenditures accounted for almost 40 percent of all dollars spent on children through the Tennessee state budget. When required matching and maintenance of effort (MOE) dollars for agencies that provide the major federally funded services to children and youth are considered, reliance on federal funding is even more apparent. *Excluding* the Basic Education Plan (BEP), seven of every ten dollars spent on services for Tennessee children and families in FY 2017-18 were from federal funding sources. State funding accounted for 25 percent of all non-BEP expenditures in FY 2017-18. Excluding the BEP, almost nine of every 10 dollars in the

state budget for children—88 percent—in FY 2017-18 were either federal or required as match/MOE for federal funding.

**What happens with federal funding has an incredible impact on Tennessee children and families.** The programs these funds support are vital for children to be safe, healthy, educated, nurtured and supported, and engaged in activities that provide them opportunities to succeed in school and become good parents and productive citizens and employees in the future.

## **2) Early Childhood**

TCCY is a long-standing supporter of quality home visiting programs as critical infrastructure for improving outcomes for Tennessee’s children and families. TCCY applauds the allocation of an additional \$1 million in non-recurring funding for evidence-based home visiting. This additional funding secures services for children and families in Knox and Sullivan Counties. **The \$1 million must be moved to recurring in order to ensure there is not a loss of home visiting services to these families.** Evidence-based home visiting services are currently available in 57 of Tennessee’s 95 counties and serve less than six percent of eligible families. **Significantly greater resources are needed to make evidence-based home visiting available to every eligible family in the state.**

Home visiting programs support families with young children through frequent visitation in their home (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly) over a substantial length of time (one to five years). Home visitors support the development of positive parenting and teach how essential parent-child interactions are for healthy brain development. Additionally, home visiting services help to prevent and mitigate adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) by providing screening and support for depression, domestic violence, and child abuse and neglect; building relationships and resilience; and connecting the family to community resources , reducing the need for removing children from their home and placing them in state custody. Home Visiting is an essential service to ensure Tennessee moves upstream and prevents the long term impacts of ACEs including poor health outcomes, including increased obesity, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, and broken bones; increased negative health behaviors like smoking, alcoholism, and drug use; decreased life potential, including lower graduation rates, academic achievement, and lost time from work.

**Early Childhood Education is a wise public investment with a solid return of \$7 for every \$1 invested. While Tennessee continues to improve the quality of pre-Kindergarten classrooms, access remains an issue. Tennessee currently serves less than 40 percent of all at-risk children.**

Recent research from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University shows that students who attended a quality Tennessee Voluntary pre-K program outpaced their peers in elementary school as long as that elementary school was high-performing with highly effective teachers.

**Quality pre-K programs are a wise investment in the future of Tennessee and would complement your Administration’s goals of improving early childhood literacy and economic opportunity to all Tennesseans.** Quality pre-K is an important strategy for building a stronger, more competitive work force. A poll commissioned by Save Our Children Action Network last year found that **63 percent of Tennessee voters believe public education should start at pre-K and be offered to all 4-year-olds.**

### **Child Care**

**Tennessee should continue to increase affordability and accessibility to quality childcare.** Quality childcare is essential for working families and provides important opportunities to help children develop the cognitive, social and emotional competencies needed to succeed in school. Providing childcare and improving the quality of childcare are essential elements in the two-generation approach employed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to addressing poverty.

Congress doubled funding for the **Child Care Development Block Grant** in February 2018. DHS is already using those additional resources to address “child care deserts,” areas where affordable quality child care is unavailable. Tennessee should ensure child care providers have the resources and supports needed to be successful and families have access to quality child care.

### **3) K-12 Education**

**More resources are needed to fully integrate trauma-informed mental health and substance abuse services into K-12 schools.** Both the Departments of Education and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services support programs to provide mental health services in schools. DOE has initiated support for schools to become more trauma-informed and also implements a federal grant, Tennessee Aware, to improve school climate and decrease stigma about mental illness among youth. Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services supports four school-based mental health programs, including School-Based Behavioral Health Liaisons in 36 counties in Tennessee.

As recommended by the report of the School Safety Working Group, **DOE and local schools need more resources to provide social workers and other school support professionals in schools.** Research indicates that up to 20 percent of students have mental health issues significant enough to cause impairment to major life functions. Though students with disabilities, students of color and students from low-income families are at even greater risk for challenges that can impact their educational outcomes, they are less likely to receive the appropriate services.

Because of the scope of social workers’ practice (prevention, education, barrier identification, treatment and intervention, assessment and evaluation) and service delivery methods (direct service, collaboration, consultation and advocacy), they can make unique contributions to a

coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to school health. In addition to supporting students with specific challenges, school social workers also promote positive school climates that benefit all students by helping build resilience.

Family Resource Centers (FRC) are important state-local, and often public-private, partnerships working to improve education opportunities and achievement among at-risk students and their families. The state funds 102 FRCs in 78 of the state's 142 school districts. Several districts continue to express interest in developing FRCs if funding were available. FRCs provide a variety of programs and services to meet the social and personal needs of students and their families. These may include case management services, life skills sessions, school-based mental health services, and early intervention programs and, in some areas, providing backpacks of food for students over the weekend.

In FY 2018, FRCs served 106,900 students and 62,350 families. FRCs engage their community to develop partnerships to provide additional support for students and their families, creating 2,383 relationships and generating almost \$11 million in services, grants, donations and volunteer hours in the previous year.

FRCs continue to be severely underfunded. Twenty five years ago, when the program began, grantees received \$50,000 per site. These funds provided for a full-time director and resources for programs and services. The funding soon decreased to \$33,300 and eventually to the current level of \$29,611.95.

Family Resource Centers play an important role in providing support for students outside the classroom, so they can learn and grow academically. **Tennessee needs to make FRCs available to students in every district and provide each FRC with resources required to help students and families receive supportive services to overcome difficulties they may encounter, including adverse childhood experiences.** The Department of Education continues to need **funding for central office administration of the statewide Family Resource Center program and to provide training, coaching and leadership for Family Resource Center staff.**

In 2006, Tennessee was the first state in the nation to create and fund a Coordinated School Health Program. Coordinated School Health (CSH) is an evidence-based model developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) designed to promote healthy school environments so children arrive at school ready to learn. Since that time, the number of students with a chronic illness or disability has increased 100 percent. During the 2017-18 school year, 233,671 students in Tennessee public schools had a chronic illness or disability diagnosis. **Tennessee needs additional funding to provide a nurse in every school.** Only 58 percent of schools employ a full-time nurse. The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that school districts provide a full-time school nurse in every school building. When schools employ a full-time nurse, there is a reduction in the achievement gap that students with chronic health conditions face; students are

less likely to miss school due to illness; and smaller nurse-to-student ratios are associated with lower absenteeism rates and higher graduation rates.

Coordinated School Health Programs have been instrumental in improving student physical activity, promoting good health for students and staff, and improving the school climate. There are many children with complex health needs attending regular public school settings. **The Commission supports providing nurses in schools across the state** and hopes your Administration and the General Assembly will again consider providing the funding in the BEP.

Tennessee needs increased funding for afterschool programming. **Hardworking families across Tennessee rely on afterschool and summer learning programs** to help kids succeed and help parents provide for their families. More than three-quarters of Tennessee parents say afterschool programs help kids gain workforce skills and help working parents keep their jobs.

#### **4) Child Welfare**

**The Department of Children’s Services needs increased placement resources at all residential levels to deal with increased numbers of children in custody or at risk of coming into custody.** To safely reduce custody numbers, DCS must have placement resources available to move children out of higher levels of care into lower levels. As their treatment needs are met, children can return home or achieve permanency in an alternative family arrangement.

Children’s Advocacy Centers (CAC) need **additional funding to support the cost of hiring and training additional forensic interviewers to assist in the investigation of child sexual abuse as recommended by the Children’s Justice Task Force.** The Task Force also recommends additional resources be provided to CACs to increase Sex Education/Sexual Abuse training for all programs working with children. CAC staff are trained in use of best practice guidelines in the field of child welfare. CACs could be highly effective in providing awareness and education about child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, to childcare centers, schools, civic and faith-based organizations, and at community events.

#### **5) Juvenile Justice Funding for implementation for the Juvenile Justice Reform Act**

TCCY is pleased to be a part of the Juvenile Justice Implementation Team and look forward to working with them to implement the legislation passed in 2018. Major sections of the legislation have only gone into effect in the past few months. However efforts to overturn some sections have already occurred and TCCY hopes the remainder of the law will be allowed to remain in effect.

**Significant resources are needed to implement the data development requirements of the legislation.** This will require both software development and hardware acquisition in Juvenile Courts all across the state, and especially in rural counties where broadband connectivity may be an issue. These costs are identified in the report of the Juvenile Justice Data Review Team.

**Funding is also needed for additional staff to administer validated risk and needs assessments by juvenile courts across the state.** Validated risk and needs assessments are instruments that can be used by juvenile courts to determine whether a youth needs to be detained in a secure placement such as detention, or if they can be better maintained and treated in their community. Detaining youth who are not a risk to the community and do not need to be placed in detention is harmful and increases the likelihood of them being detained in the future, including as adults.

**Significant resources are needed for legal representation of youth in juvenile court.** Youth are often placed in detention or removed from their home because they are not receiving adequate representation in the legal system.

**There is a need for more funds for training judges, juvenile court staff, law enforcement, DCS staff and schools on provisions of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act.**

**Additional funding is needed to increase availability of evidence-based community alternatives to detention** and to provide an increased array of services for youth adjudicated delinquent. More Level III placements provide step down programs for those exiting Youth Development Centers.

#### **6) Transition Age Youth**

**The Department of Children’s Services needs additional resources to expand eligibility for extension of foster care services to youth working at least 80 hours per month or participating in activities to prepare for work.** Current federal and state law allows DCS to expand services to this category of young adults, but DCS has not done so due to budget limitations. Funding for the services are IV-E eligible, meaning state dollars spent for these services would receive significant matching federal funds. Allowing youth who have lost academic eligibility but are employed part-time to continue receiving extension of foster care services may help them return to school and complete their education objectives after their academic eligibility is restored. Today most people take five years to earn a Bachelor’s degree and many also must work part-time to support themselves while in school. Opening extension of foster care to youth employed 80 hours a month provides an additional safety net for those who struggle academically and need more support to complete their education.

#### **7) Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services increase accessibility for children and families**

**Sustainable funding is needed to implement and expand System of Care Across TN (SOCAT) statewide** to provide child-focused, family-driven, community-based mental health services to Tennessee children in every county. TCCY and DMHSAS continue our partnership with the Council on Children’s Mental Health and efforts to create a System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT). SOCAT is funded by a \$12 million federal grant from SAMSHA. A

system of care is a spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with or at risk for mental health or other challenges and their families. It is organized into a coordinated network, builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs in order to help them function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life. Systems of Care are child-focused, family-driven, community-based and culturally and linguistically competent. The grant builds on almost 20 years of experience in creating SOCs in local communities and the work of the Council on Children's Mental Health. There are 12 sites established across the state and each site can serve children and youth in up to seven surrounding counties as caseloads allow. Sustainable funding would allow for further expansion into all parts of the states.

Children suffer from the effects of untreated parental mental illness and substance abuse.

**Additional funding is still needed to increase access and availability for substance abuse treatment and services for pregnant women and their children to reduce the effects of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.**

However, 2018 saw a significantly lower number of NAS births reported to the Department of Health than 2017 and the lowest number reported since DOH started collecting the data in 2013. There is still a lack of treatment programs for pregnant women and mothers who suffer from substance abuse in Tennessee, but the gap is being reduced as more programs come online. Over 79 percent of these mothers are under the care of a physician, using medication assisted treatment for addiction, or other legal prescription to treat chronic pain or other conditions.

Coupled with the increased awareness of mental health needs in schools and communities since the tragic school shootings in recent years, more children and families are being referred for crisis intervention services. Suicide remains the second-leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 10 to 19 nationally and in Tennessee. **More resources should be devoted to mobile crisis services around the state to serve children and families.**

Children and families continue to have difficulty accessing mental health services in their communities even when private insurance or TennCare coverage is available. It is even more difficult for families who are uninsured.