



The Advocate



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Calendar of Events

Events relating to helping children are available at: www.tennessee.gov/tccy/webcalen.pdf.

TCCY

For more information on the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth and its programs, check out the website at www.tn.gov/tccy.

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Nashville Disaster Displaces TCCY

The historic floods hitting Nashville May 1-2 damaged the Andrew Johnson Tower, displacing TCCY staff for more than three weeks. However TCCY was able to continue its work, including holding the scheduled May Commission meeting.

The Andrew Johnson Tower lower floor was under 12 feet of water. Although it was reported 29 state buildings were

damaged by the flood, the Andrew Johnson Tower was the last to reopen because major repairs were required to the electrical and fire response systems. The Commission's offices on the ninth floor were undamaged.

CPORT staff completed evaluations at Mountain View Youth Training Center, KIDS COUNT staff helped the Annie E. Casey Foundation successfully release a special KIDS COUNT report, and the Juvenile Justice Division collected grant applications due while awaiting the return to Andrew Johnson Tower.

The Commission met in space in the Rachel Jackson Building borrowed from the Department of Correction and the Select Committee on Children and Youth. Our partners in the Department of Finance and Administration's Shared Services Solutions shared space and invaluable assistance, and TCCY staff were able to access TCCY computer files by working in an Edison training room in Tennessee Tower. Other TCCY staff were able to work from their homes.

TCCY staff members are grateful to be back in their offices and for the improved efficiency of working in familiar surroundings with full access to all needed files, supplies and resources. 🏠



The Andrew Johnson Tower is on the left in this image gleaned from a YouTube video shot from the Capitol on Tuesday, May 4th (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddkd36lrwio>).

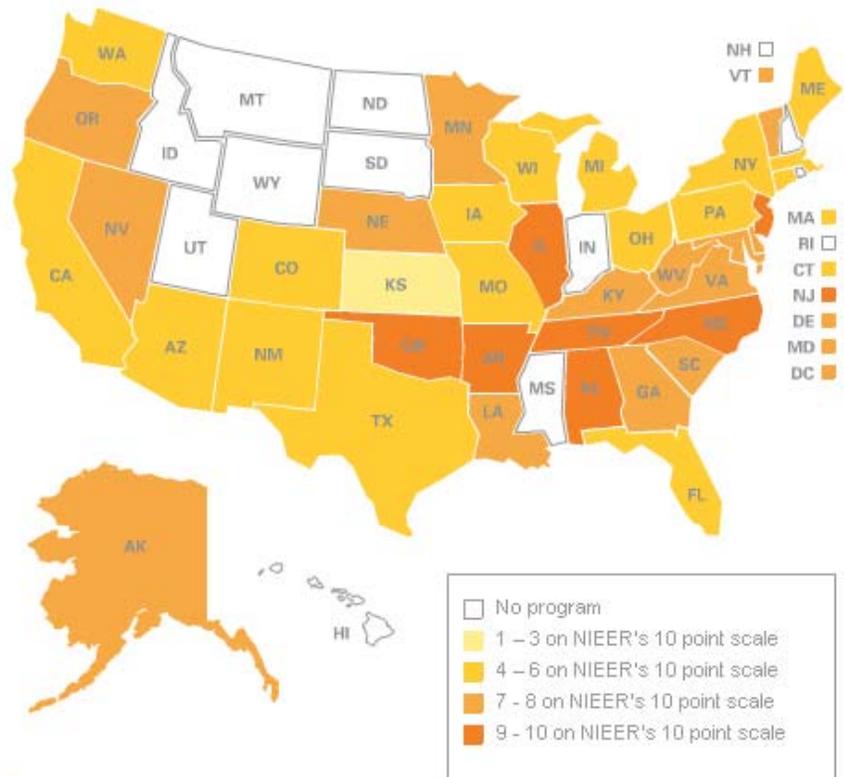
Tennessee Pre-K Gives Children a Foundation for the Future

Human brains at birth are undeveloped. The early years are busy ones for brains. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard, each step in brain development is built on the success of earlier development.

“Children are our future,” says the adage. “A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which every passerby leaves a mark,” says the Chinese proverb. These truths imply a shared responsibility, but the first implies intentionality and planning.

Most people value children. Few would see children wandering toward a street or highway and not feel a responsibility to protect them. However, our children are wandering into a complex world and as people who value children, we all have a responsibility to protect them and help them prepare for the world.

Quality Pre-K: States Meeting Benchmarks



Source

National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. The map's figures reflect quality criteria met for 2005-06.

Graphic Source: Pre-K Now

Children need a solid foundation on which to base a successful life. Many of them do not arrive at school prepared to learn. The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative reports half the educational achievement gaps between poor and non-poor children exist at kindergarten entry, with poorer children more likely to have language, health, social and emotional problems that hamper academic performance.

Children do not come into the world with equal opportunities for success: some are born in educated, affluent environments that supply everything needed to succeed; some are born in environments that do not support success. While affluence is not an absolute determinant, it usually provides a significant head start.

Our nation loses when barriers prevent its children from reaching their full potential. Quality early education helps overcome barriers. Decades of research, including the well-known High Scope/Perry Preschool Study and the University of North Carolina Abecedarian Project, have found early education to be a good investment.

According to an April 2010 report from the Pew Center on the States, “A vast and emerging body of research continues to demonstrate the potential of publicly funded, large-scale pre-k programs as a strategy for school

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Foundation

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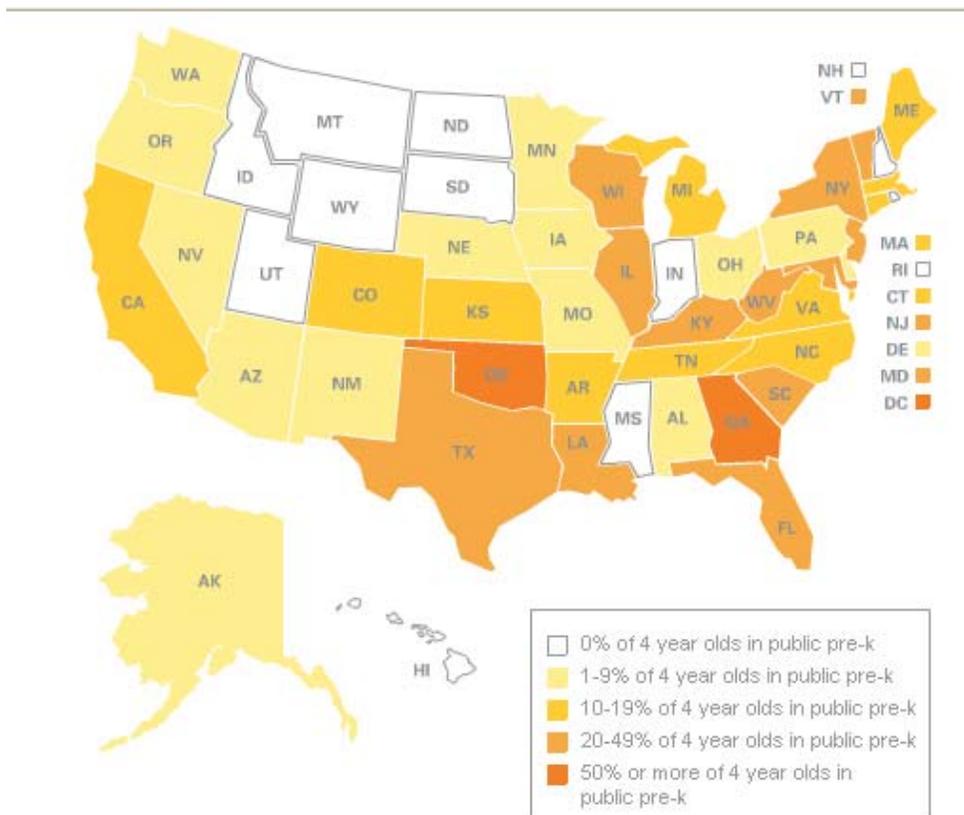
reform and turning around a record of underachievement.”

A 2010 analysis of 123 research programs found pre-k benefits that lasted beyond the early years.

The state Comptroller’s Office of Research and Education Accountability reported in March on a study by Strategic Research Group, finding academic progress in kindergarten and the first grade among children receiving pre-k. The study examined academic progress as measured by the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) of standardized tests.

The study found the impact was greater for low income children as defined by participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program. However, the differences between the performances of children who attended pre-k and those who did not appeared to disappear in later grades.

Participation by 4-Year Olds in Pre-K



Source

National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. Map data exclude four year olds served by federally-funded Head Start or special education programs. State percentages are based on 2006-07 enrollment as a percentage of total state population of four year olds.

Graphic Source: Pre-K Now

The study, which did not involve random sampling, does not actually answer many questions. Long-term studies of quality early learning programs have found effects on many areas of life, but this study only looked at academic achievement. It appears the public schools in Nashville are successful in helping students who did not attend pre-k overcome their initial deficiencies; however, little research has looked at this. The study also does not examine other possible emotional and social impacts. Some studies suggest pre-k’s improvement in social and emotional development are as important as its academic effects.

Vanderbilt University researchers began a longitudinal, randomized study of the effectiveness of the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K Program with the 2009-10 school year.

Quality is critical to the success of pre-k in providing a base for the rest of a child’s life. In 2008, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Tennessee funded pre-k programs that met 9 of 10 benchmarks (comprehensive standards, bachelor’s level teachers, specialized training for pre-k, at least 15 hours of in-service, class sizes of fewer than 20 students, teacher-student ratios of 1 to 10 or less, screening, referral and support services, at least one meal provided and quality standards checklist). The state did not, however, require assistant teachers to have a Child Development Associate credential.

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Foundation

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Adequate Funding

Governor Bredesen's budget proposal to protect funding for Tennessee's pre-k program earned a national commendation from Pre-K Now. The governor also proposed making training opportunities more accessible for all child care and pre-k providers through the use of school systems' online technology, which will help achieve the last NIEER quality benchmark for Tennessee, credentialing of assistant teachers.



In the NIEER report on 2009 spending, Tennessee's per child spending from all sources on pre-k was \$5,578, compared to \$8,587 for K-12 education. However, as Tennessee's pre-k program has expanded, per child state spending has decreased, dropping from \$7,595 in 2002 to 4,520 in 2009.

Tennessee was ranked 18th in access of 3 year olds to pre-k, and 23rd in access for 4 year olds. All Tennessee counties but Sumner participated in the program. NIEER ranked the state at 15th for spending.

The failure to invest in children can have disastrous consequences. An organization of retired military leaders, Mission: Readiness, Military Leaders for Children (www.missionreadiness.org) reported 75 percent of youth ages 17 to 24, including nearly a half a million Tennesseans, were not fit to serve in the military for health or education reasons or for having a criminal record. This group views investing in our children through early education as a plain common sense issue critical to our National Security. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (www.fightcrime.org) supports pre-k funding, viewing it as a way of giving children a start in a positive, productive life that precludes them from turning to crime. ¶¶

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TCCY Helps KIDS COUNT Program Release Report on Reading

Science tells us how important it is to support developing brain architecture in young children, whose brains are built much like building a house: laying a firm foundation, framing the walls and installing sound wiring. Tennessee early education and reading experts agree and say the state's economy and quality of life can be improved when its children begin their lives with the reading skills that are the foundation for most other learning.



The experts were speaking at an event to present the findings of a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Program, "Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters."

The report provides a comprehensive review of the challenges faced by children who struggle with reading and chronicles how these perpetuate disadvantage from generation to generation, especially among low income children.

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Cindy Durham, Chair Nashville	
Natasha Blackshear Nashville	Trudy Hughes Maryville
Sidney Bynum Nashville	Carlton Lewis Nashville
Leon Caldwell Collierville	Scott W. Meltzer Franklin
Joshua Conner Nashville	Diane Neighbors Nashville
Beverly Cosley Chattanooga	Timothy A. Perry Kingsport
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Tim Goldsmith Memphis	Dwight Stokes Sevierville
Jere Hargrove Cookeville	Nancy Williams Memphis
Marti Herndon Martin	Joetta Yarbro Dyersburg
Denise Hobbs-Coker Shelbyville	Linda O'Neal Executive Director

Linda O'Neal, executive director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY), said, "The future prosperity of Tennessee and the nation depends on the development of a workforce with skills for the 21st century. The report indicates unfortunately only a little more than one in four Tennessee fourth graders (28 percent) scored proficient in reading, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, giving the state a ranking of 37th."

Educators in Tennessee have plans for improving reading education.

James Herman, executive director of reading for the Tennessee Department of Education, said the Race to the Top grant, which Tennessee is only one of two states to receive to date, will ensure schools have effective teachers and leaders. "The Race to the Top will help ensure standards for reading will be implemented by all teachers," Herman said, "Content teachers will receive instruction in content literacy.... All teachers will be evaluated on classroom performance of teaching reading."

"Students struggling in reading in all schools will receive intervention so they can reach their full potential in reading," said Herman.

Tennessee Commissioner of Education Tim Webb participated in the national release event. He said: "If one thing comes out of the \$500 million Tennessee won from the Race to the Top, it's leaving a legacy of changing expectations so our citizens expect more.... The expectation of the population of educators - expecting the most of every child - that's the expectation we have to change."

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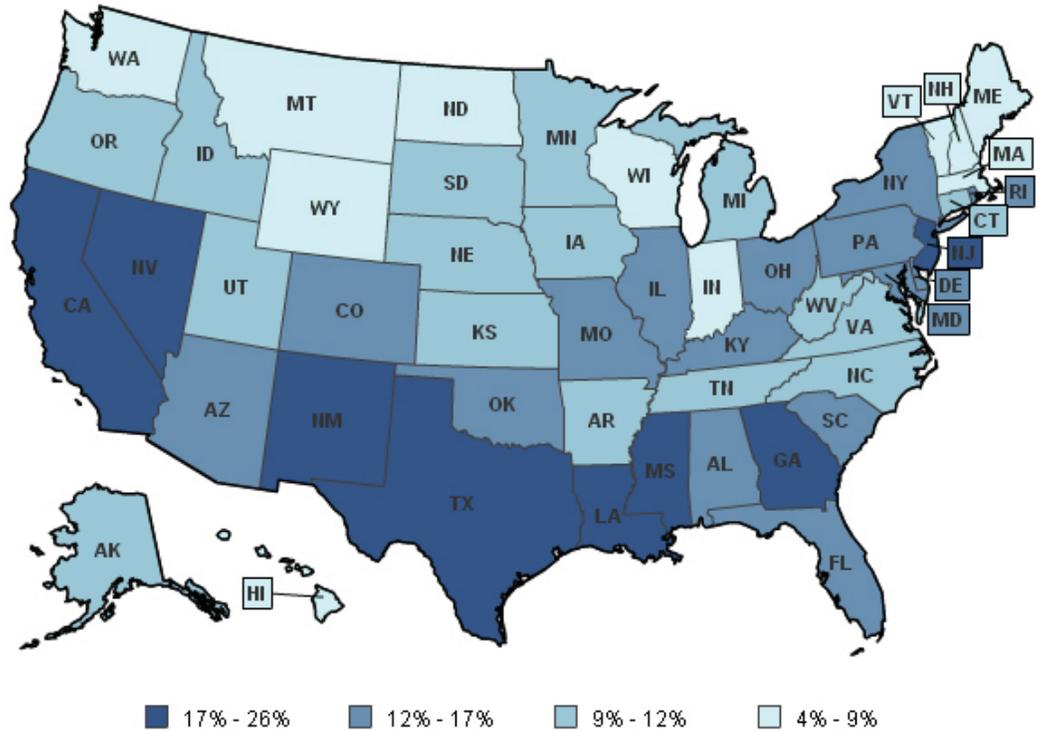
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**Children Ages 1 to 5 whose Family Members Read to Them
Fewer than 3 Days per Week (Percent) – 2007**



Source: Early Warning! Annie E. Casey Foundation

Reading

Continued from Page 4.

“If the race to the top, as Secretary Duncan has said, is our moon shot, and I really believe it is, if we get what we are talking about today right, that’s the rocket that is going to take us there,” Webb added.

Herman said collaboration between the state Department of Education and nonprofit community organizations, businesses and professional reading groups will help to strengthen the reading process.

Dr. David Dickinson, professor of education and interim chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of Education, said, “Achieving grade-level reading...is a goal that only will be reached through early, concerted, coordinated and sustained actions that begin at birth and continue through grade three.

“Educating children...is a challenge for our state, our communities and our families as well as for our schools.”

Dickinson acknowledged communities, neighborhood agencies, schools and families are being stressed by a host of complex challenges. He said, “No single link in this interconnected web of supports for children can accomplish this task alone, but we can accomplish it if we create sustained, coordinated and focused efforts designed to build the reading competencies of all children.”

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Children's Advocacy Days 2010!



Seigenthaler moderates gubernatorial forum at Children's Advocacy Days.

TCCY's 2010 Children's Advocacy Days was another success, thanks to the participation of many people, including the candidates for governor.

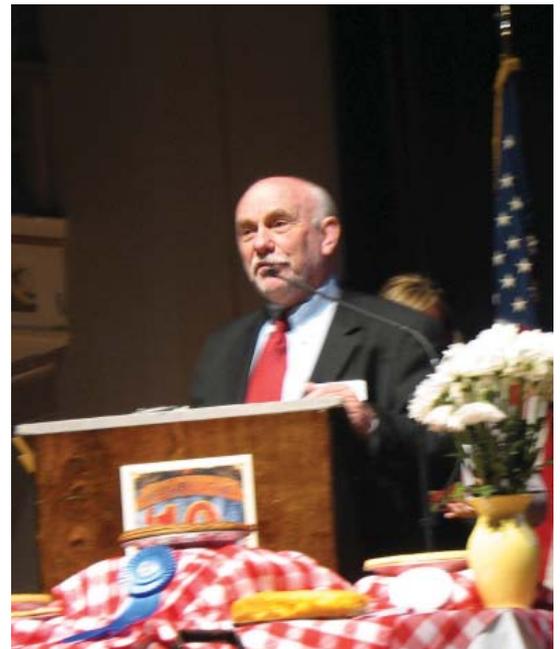
People attending the event heard about the state's now successful Race to the Top application. Lowell Perry, Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee CEO, kicked off the event. Other speakers included Dr. Linda Gilbert, director of schools, Murfreesboro City Schools, on Family Resource Centers; Lois Snow, Loudon County coordinator and Elaine Jackson, Stewart County coordinator, on Coordinated School Health; Mary Lee, business development specialist, Youth Villages, on Transitioning Youth; Carol Westlake, executive director, Tennessee Disabilities Coalition, on Disability Services; Millie Sweeney, assistant director of programs, and a youth panel from Tennessee Voices for Children, on Children's Mental Health.

Bill Bentley, president of Voices for America's Children, began Wednesday's events, which also included a presentation by Deputy Commissioner of Education Robert Greene on Tennessee's Race to the Top.

John Seigenthaler, of the Freedom Forum and previously publisher of The Tennessean, moderated a forum on children's issues with seven gubernatorial candidates.

A youth who has turned his life around and a leader who counted improved health of Tennessee children as her legacy and media representatives who help their community better understand children's issues were honored by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.

Connie Hall Givens, executive director the Tennessee Department of Education's Coordinated School Health Program, was posthumously awarded the 2010 Jim Pryor Child Advocacy Award for her lifelong dedication to school health. Givens, who died in



Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens accepts the Jim Pryor Child Advocacy Award on behalf of his late wife, Connie Givens.

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Violence Prevention

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Above: Tyler Clarke Kennedy Samuel shares her story.

Right: Participants listen to agency presentations.

Below: 2010 CAD poster.



November 2009, devoted her life to improving the health of children as a school nurse in Hawkins County for 27 years and as director of the state Coordinated School Health Program.

Geronn Moore, the vice president of the Mule Town Family Network Youth in Action Council, received the Youth Excellence Award. After his accelerating behavior resulted in his spending a night in a detention center, Moore turned his life around. Participation on the youth council gave him an opportunity to educate others about his challenges and to help others.

Three Making KIDS COUNT Media Awards were presented to print media representatives. The *Blount Today* newspaper and Sadie Fowler, Brian Mosely and Mary Reeves of the *Shelbyville Times Gazette* won Making KIDS COUNT Awards for small market print media. The staff of both newspapers were recognized for their services to their communities, especially in showcasing child-serving agencies.



The (Nashville) *Tennessean* Opinion Page was awarded the 2010 Making KIDS COUNT awards for large market print media for devoting its entire page each day

to one issue of concern to Nashvillians in order to provide more in depth coverage from a variety of points of view. A number of those editorial pages focused on issues of importance for Tennessee children.

Youth participation, always a highlight of Children's Advocacy Days, included by a dramatic presentation by the Carroll Adademy Theater Group on Tuesday. Tyler Clarke Kennedy Samuel, a senior at East Literature Magnet School, who has toured Europe with an honor chorus despite challenges caused by her deteriorating sight, sang on Wednesday. Glenclyff High School students helped TCCY on Tuesday.



Plans are underway for 2011, which will be the best one yet. 🏠

Glenclyff High School culinary arts students helped make sure everyone got plenty to eat on Tuesday.

O'Neal Honored by Statewide Training and Advocacy Agencies



Linda O'Neal, executive director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, has been honored by two statewide agencies – the Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare and the Tennessee Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers – this spring.

O'Neal was awarded the Linda Christie and William F. Moynihan Lifetime Achievement Award by the Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare at its 97th annual conference. The award recognizes one whose life and work on behalf of others is exemplary and contributes significantly to the well-being of Tennesseans.

The NASW-Tennessee Chapter also honored O'Neal as its Public Official of the Year. In accepting the award, she said, despite more than 20 years with directing a state agency, she views herself as a more of child advocate than a public official.

TCSW's award honors its executive director from 1976 to 2006, Linda Christie Moynihan, and her husband, former Metro Social Services Director Bill Moynihan, who died in 2003. Linda Moynihan, a long-time community volunteer prior to taking the position at TCSW, and her husband, a social worker who led a nonprofit agency before moving to Metro, stand as premier examples of what committed people can do.

The presenters said O'Neal was honored because of her dedicated advocacy for children and youth, the respect with which she is regarded by other advocates and her leadership role in getting things done for Tennessee children. She is a mentor for other public servants and advocates and an expert source to the legislature, the media and children's services agencies. Associates and co-workers are awed by her commitment and her hard work on behalf of Tennessee children.

Linda O'Neal has been the executive director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth since 1988. She and her husband of 37 years, Michael O'Neal, have one daughter, Sarah Flanigen.

TCSW is a statewide membership organization whose mission is to promote the economic and social well-being of all Tennesseans, particularly for those most vulnerable. It began in 1913 as a training and advocacy organization to better the lives of Tennesseans.

The National Association of Social Workers is a professional organization of social workers. It promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy. 

