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Advocate

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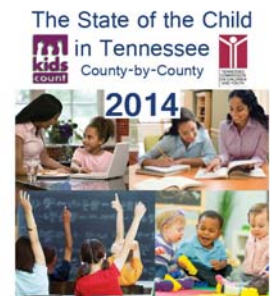
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How Well Off Are Children in Tennessee Counties

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KIDS COUNT



Report Ranks Tennessee Counties on Child Well-Being

Good public policies and wise investments improve the state's economic success. Investments in improving outcomes for children today help them develop the social, emotional and cognitive skills necessary for success in school, in employment and in life. Unfortunately, children across the state do not have equal opportunities to survive and thrive.

For the first time, the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth's annual *KIDS COUNT: The State of the Child in Tennessee* ranks the state's counties based on 11 key indicators of child well-being. Profiles of each county in the report include 34 indicators, with the 11 most outcome-oriented used for the rankings. The report is a companion to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *2015 National KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which ranks states on child well-being. TCCY is the Tennessee affiliate of the KIDS COUNT program, which ranked the state 36th in this year's national ranking.

Counties with the best rankings are distributed across the state. Middle Tennessee had the most counties with better rankings, while the Southeast region had no counties in the top 25 rankings. Rankings for the state's four urban counties were Knox, 8th; Hamilton, 49th; Davidson, 87th; and Shelby, 93rd.

Whether counties are ranked at the top or bottom, there are still too many children in Tennessee

whose opportunities are limited. With a 36th national ranking, there is clearly room for improvement. In every county, concerted local efforts can reduce unnecessary deaths, child abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school suspensions and other negative outcomes. All Tennesseans have a vested interest in improving the future for our children.

Indicators for the rankings were chosen with a preference for measures of outcome rather than process. Indicators were not used in the rankings when they are highly correlated or when it is ambiguous whether a high or low ranking is better.

The percent of children in poverty is an indicator somewhat predictive of county rankings. Two generation approaches to help parents find work and children receive high quality early childhood education are effective strategies to impact this.

A complete list with rankings for every county overall and on each of the 11 indicators is available at <http://tn.gov/tccy/article/tccy-kcsoc14>;

Methodology for creating the rankings:

<http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/tccy/attachments/indexmethodology.pdf>;

Map of state by quintile ranking: <http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/tccy/attachments/rankmap.pdf>.

Factors to Improve County Child Well-Being

County rankings on the individual 11 indicators provide insights into strategies to improve outcomes for children and therefore county rankings. Many of the indicators are interrelated, so improvements in one will positively impact others. Keeping students in school is important because those who are suspended are less likely to graduate. If fewer adolescent girls become pregnant, they are more likely to stay in school, positively impacting high school graduation rates. While the teen pregnancy rate has declined nationally and in Tennessee, it is still unacceptably high. In addition to emphasis on abstinence, effective pregnancy prevention, including access to voluntary Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs), is needed for adolescents who are sexually active.

Universal safe sleep practices would reduce infant mortality, as unsafe sleep accounted for more than one in five infant deaths in the state in 2013. Babies should sleep **ABC** – **A**lone, on their **B**acks, in a **C**rib, as described in a video from the Tennessee Department of Health.

Accident prevention and consistent use of bicycle helmets and child safety seats help reduce child deaths. Adolescent deaths are best prevented by safe driving, including using seat belts, no texting or cell phone use while driving, and strict compliance with the Graduated Driver Licensing laws. The indicator in the rankings that can only be addressed at the state level is children without health insurance. Finding a way for Tennessee to access Federal Funds through the Affordable Care Act is the primary strategy for impacting this.

Resources:

Tennessee Department of Health Safe Sleep video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dF1RWnzq3Q>;

Tennessee plan to access ACA federal funds: <http://www.tn.gov/tenncare/article/insure-tennessee>

Tennessee Department of Transportation, Graduated Driver License Program:

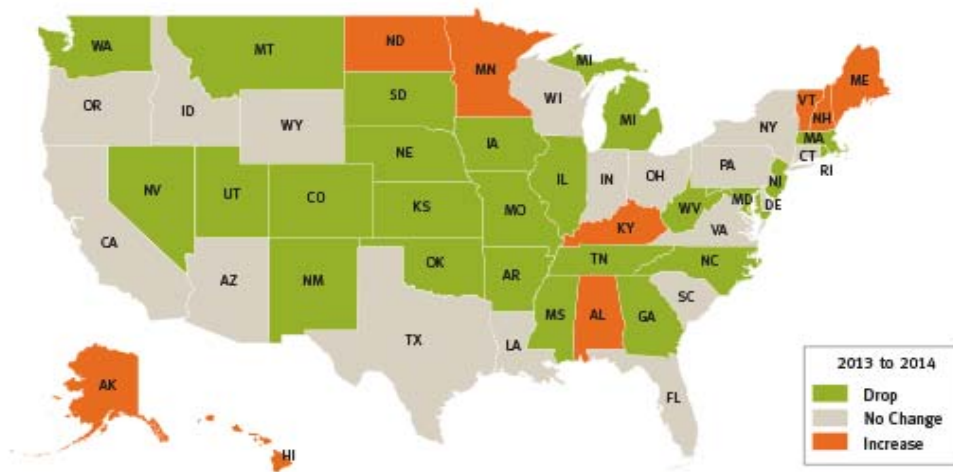
<http://www.tn.gov/tdot/topic/license-program>.

New Poverty Statistics Released by Census Bureau

Nationally, income measures changed little between 2013 and 2014 as reported by the U.S. Census in September, dropping from \$54,462 in median household income to \$53,657. The number of men and women with earnings from working full-time, year-round went up; however, this also did not reach statistical significance, either. The South continued to have a lower median income than did other regions.

The standard poverty measure was created 50 years ago. In recent years, the Census has reported an alternative measure, which includes the success of programs to help poor people survive. The rate of poverty was slightly higher for all people, but the national alternative poverty rate for children under age 18 was 17 percent compared to 21 percent (more than one in five) using the older method.

Little Change in National Child Poverty Rates from 2013 to 2014



Source: Annie E. Casey

Census press release: 1.usa.gov/1KIPILL;

U.S. Census, Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage, 2014: 1.usa.gov/1M28yv3

Census Report Documents Increase in Health Coverage

The Census also released a report on health insurance coverage, showing a decline in uninsured Americans from 2013.

U.S. Census, **Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2014**, Current Population Reports: 1.usa.gov/1GhLjLv.

Updates

CASA Celebrates Successes, Honors TCCY, Rep. Sargent

The Tennessee Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association held its annual meeting in September. The association honored TCCY Executive Director Linda O'Neal and Commission members and staff with its Champion for Children Award. State CASA director Lynn Farrar credited TCCY with successful state budget support that has added funding for CASA expansion and as the programs' biggest advocates. Rep. Charles Sargent, chairman of the Finance, Ways and Means Committee, was honored as the Legislator of the Year.

State CASA funding, which is administered by TCCY, helps fund the 28 local CASA programs serving 5,421 children in 47 counties. Nearly 1,200 trained Tennesseans provided 119,454 volunteer hours valued at \$2.4 million.

Contact CASA at (615) 220-3990 or www.tncasa.org.

Commission Staff

TCCY welcomes two of its own to the central office. **Sumita Keller**, who formerly served as TCCY policy advocate is returning to the agency as **Home Visiting Collaboration director**. Sumita represented TCCY on the Home Visitation Collaboration previously. Since leaving TCCY, Sumita served as director of the Department of Human Services Office of Customer Service and, added to her family, as she and her husband, Dustin Keller, are the parents of Ranjan Thomas Keller.

TCCY Upper Cumberland Regional coordinator **John Rust** will be moving to the TCCY Nashville office as **Field Operations director**. John has staffed the Upper Cumberland Regional Council since 2011. He served as UCCY council president prior to joining TCCY.

Commission Members

Multitalented TCCY Commission member **Rev. Audrey Taylor Gonzalez** published her fourth book and first work of fiction in September. She has begun author signings and will be at Nashville's Parnassus Books Dec. 4.



Mark Your Calendar

Oct. 4, **Addressing the Challenges of Poverty National Conference**, Hilton, Cincinnati, OH. Visit <http://www.ahaprocess.com/>.

Oct. 6-8, **2015 Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Conference**, Charleston, WV. Register at bit.ly/1R0JV6o.

Oct. 9, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. EDT, **ETCCY Stewards of Children "Darkness to Light" Child Abuse Prevention Training**, Family Justice Center Auditorium, 400 Harriet Tubman, Knoxville. Register at bit.ly/1Vrnwjs.

Oct. 10, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. CDT, **Human Trafficking Awareness Training**, Calvary Church, Cordova, TN. Register at bit.ly/1Ffsbmx.

Oct. 22, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CDT, **Memphis/Shelby County Children and Youth Council Training, "Sex Trafficking of Minors,"** Urban Child Institute, Memphis. Register at bit.ly/1j11Fnb.

Oct. 23, Northwest and Southwest Councils on Children and Youth co-sponsor **How Adverse Childhood Experiences Shape Health Across the Lifespan**, Ayers Auditorium, Jackson State Community College. Register at bit.ly/1j11Fnb.

Oct. 23, **Northeast Tennessee Council on Children and Youth Conference: "Entering Adulthood: Guiding Youth for Success"**, Johnson City. Contact Diane.Wise@tn.gov for information and to register.

Oct. 29-30, **Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth meeting**, Fall Creek Falls State Park. Contact (615) 741-2633 for information.

Oct. 30, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., **Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare Southeast Fall Conference**, Christ United Methodist Church, Chattanooga, Register at <http://conta.cc/1QAZt0A>.

March 8-9, **Children's Advocacy Days: Tennessee's Next Generation: Under Construction**, War Memorial Auditorium. Contact Richard.Kennedy@tn.gov.

In the News

National Public Radio, **Tennessee Pre-K Debate: Spinach Vs. Easter Grass**: n.pr/1KRwNMB.

Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, "Guest column: Vanderbilt study is an opportunity for improvement": bit.ly/1WxY9Pj.

The Atlantic, "Child Care Spending: Why Being a Poor Kid in America Is Particularly Awful": theatltn.tc/1Gh9euA.

WKRN, Nashville, "Vanderbilt study adds fuel to pre-K debate; Metro finds answers" bit.ly/1FlaVGD.

Research Information

Lipsey, M., Farran, D., and Hoffer, K., Peabody Research Institute, Vanderbilt University, **A Randomized Control Trial of a Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Program on Children's Skills and Behaviors through Third Grade**: bit.ly/1iLeFMN.

Child Trends, **World Family Map 2015: Mapping Family Change and Child Well-Being Outcomes**: bit.ly/1N16nxN.

Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts

Tennessee Children in Poverty



CHILDREN IN POVERTY (PERCENT)

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Children Without Health Coverage



CHILDREN WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE (PERCENT)

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

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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