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Advocate

July 2018

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Linda Signs Off



Commission Chair Brenda Davis & Linda O'Neal



Rob Mortensen, Davis, O'Neal, Phil Acord



Bon voyage cake gives clue to O'Neal retirement plans.



Jann Jackson, senior associate, Policy Reform and Advocacy, Annie E. Casey Foundation

June was a month of transition and celebration for TCCY, as we said goodbye to longtime executive director Linda O'Neal and welcomed Richard Kennedy as its new leader.

O'Neal presided over her last meeting of the Commission, and our partners and friends joined us to send her off in style at a reception at the Tennessee Justice Center. The Justice Center building used to house the YWCA where O'Neal's parents met at a dance in 1946 and was the longtime home of Sarah Polk, widow of President Polk, who was noted for her political savvy, unusual for women in the mid-19th century.

Commission members joined TCCY staff and others who have toiled with Linda over her years as an advocate at a reception Friday afternoon.

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Richard Kennedy Takes the Helm



Richard Kennedy was appointed to be TCCY executive director beginning June 16, 2018. Kennedy began with the agency in 2000 as an ombudsman and served as the associate director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth since January 2011. He first served as ombudsman and was later promoted to director of field operations before becoming associate director.

Kennedy has spent his entire professional career working directly with and advocating for children and youth. Prior to joining state government, Kennedy worked with the Davidson County Community Services Agency, Camelot, Hermitage Hall and the Greater New Orleans Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

A native Middle Tennessean, Kennedy holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Lambuth University in Jackson, Tennessee, and a Master of Arts degree in counseling from Trevecca University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Kennedy is an alumnus of LEAD Tennessee, Tennessee Government Management Institute and Tennessee Government Executive Institute. He is an inaugural member of the Tennessee Government Leadership Council. His involvement in the community includes having recently completed his final term on the board of directors for Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee, where he served as board chair in 2015-16. He has also volunteered as a Big Brother with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Nashville.

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Tennessee Solidifies Gains in Child Well-Being in 2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book

Tennessee is making a marked improvement in several areas of child well-being, ranking 35th in the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released June 27 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The state's overall ranking is composed of four domain ranks: economic well-being, education, health and family and community. Each domain is made up of four measures.

Tennessee achieved its highest rank, 27th, in the health domain. Other rankings were 33rd in economic well-being, 35th in education and 38th in family and community. The state improved on one or more measures in all the domains except health.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides a picture of where Tennessee is and where it needs to focus more attention, and it provides data to inform changes states may want to make for improvements in the future. The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth is the KIDS COUNT Tennessee state affiliate.

“Tennessee’s early adoption of expanded TennCare and CoverKids for children has contributed to a strong ranking on its health domain over the years,” said Rose Naccarato, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) KIDS COUNT® director. “As other states have expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, this advantage has waned. Though most low-income children still have access to TennCare or CoverKids, their parents are often unaware because they themselves are not eligible.”

“The state has put particular focus on infant health and on improvements in early education,” Naccarato said. “Over 60 percent of Tennessee three- and four-year-olds lack access to pre-K, and the programs that are available are inconsistent in terms of quality.”

This year’s *Data Book* focuses on the undercount of young children in the decennial Census, and the impact this can have in 2020. TCCY’s analysis of state spending on children finds that, outside of the BEP, federal funds and their required matching and maintenance of effort dollars account for almost 90 percent of spending on children in Tennessee. Much of this spending is allocated based on either population counts in the census or on formulas that include those counts as a critical input.

“For Tennessee to continue its progress, it needs to be able to describe its problems and measure the impact of its solutions,” Naccarato said. “To do so, it needs an accurate census, one in which all ‘kids count.’ For more than 60 years, TCCY has worked to be a voice for children who have no voice. When children are not counted, they are truly silenced.

Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Project, [2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book](#).

TCCY, [KIDS COUNT: State of the Child in Tennessee](#).

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Regional Councils on Children and Youth



Membership in a TCCY regional council on children and youth is one of the best deals for child advocates and, also, an example of customer-focused government that is effective and efficient.

The TCCY staffs and coordinates the nine regional councils that provide organizational structure for statewide networking on behalf of children and families. The councils address the needs of children and families at the regional level and offer local-level feedback to the Commission. Children's services professionals and other citizens interested in improving the lives of Tennessee's children are members of the councils.

TCCY coordinators have offices in each region and provide staff support to the councils. Each council has its own leadership structure and membership fee levels. Regional councils function on different calendars, but several have summer membership campaigns. Contact the coordinator for your region for information on membership.

TCCY councils work to make available information about services to children and events of interest to advocates and other interested Tennesseans.

TCCY [Regional Councils on Children and Youth.](#)

TCCY [Regions.](#)

TCCY [Regional Coordinator Contacts.](#)

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TCCY Adds Federal Policy Information ListServ

TCCY is now sharing information on national policy issues related to children. TCCY's children's policy advocate, Steve Petty, has created a TCCY Federal Update Listserv separate from the Legislative Listserv to share federal level information on policy and budget issues related to child well-being, health, mental health, child welfare and juvenile justice.

Sign up to receive TCCY federal policy information by following the instructions at <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/tccy/advocacy-policy/federal-advocacy-issues/leg-listserv.html>.

Sign up to receive TCCY Tennessee legislative updates and the *The Advocate* at <https://www.tn.gov/tccy/advocate-collaborate/tccy-ac-advlegis/tccy-ac-advocacy/leg-listserv.html>.

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Update

TCCY staff members have been celebrating graduations. Congratulations to our graduates:

Jill Murphy's daughter Elise Murphy graduated from Roane County High School. She will be attending the UT-Chattanooga in the fall. She plans to study chemical engineering.

Jerri Moore's daughter Sara Lewis graduated from Greenfield High School. She will be attending the UT-Martin. She has been awarded three scholarships.

Steve Petty's daughters, Sarah and Rachel, graduated from Stewart's Creek High School. They will be joining their brother at UT-Knoxville.

Rosalyn Leavell-Rice's granddaughter Jayden Byers graduated from Bob Jones High School in Madison, AL She is planning to be a nurse practitioner.

Khalfani Hargrow, son of TCCY Juvenile Justice/Second Look director **Craig Hargrow**, was sworn in as a member of the Coast Guard Academy class of 2022 on July 2. He was homeschooled and graduated through the The Farm Satellite School.

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Mark Your Calendar

July 18, 12 noon to 1:30 p.m., **Memphis-Shelby County Children and Youth Council Lunch and Learn, Understanding the Opioid Crisis**, Benjamin Hooks Library, 3030 Poplar, Memphis. Information and registration: <http://bit.ly/2yvqGmD>. Presenters: Lindsey Blevins, LPC-MHSP, School Liaison, and John Fisher, Director, Business Development | Clinical Services Lakeside Behavioral Health System. This Lunch and Learn is BYOL (Bring Your Own Lunch). Beverages will be provided.

July 31, 9:30 a.m. EDT to noon, **Northeast Tennessee ACEs Knowledge Mobilization Team Meeting**, City of Johnson City Development Center, 603 Bert Street, Suite 6, Johnson City. Information and registration: jill.stott@tn.gov.

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In the News

Breunlin, E., *Knoxville News Sentinel*, **UT social work experts condemn separation of children at border**, <http://bit.ly/2lqNDhL>.

WTVC, Newschannel9, **Tennessee stays ranked 35th in child well-being study**, June 27, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2yKViB2>.

Weakley County Press, **Kids Count Data Now Available**, June 29, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2ILNLZI>.

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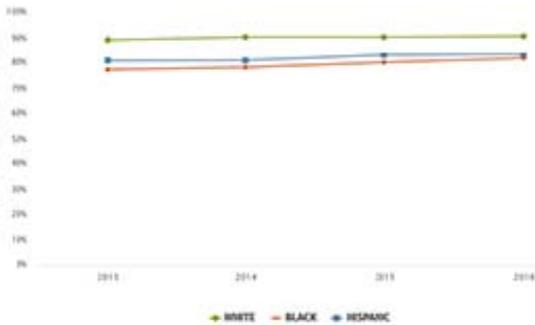
Research Information

Zimmer, C., *The Atlantic*, **Can a Parent's Life Experience Change the Genes a Child Inherits?: Inside the controversial world of epigenetics research**, June 21, 2018, <https://theatln.tc/2tyqRbt>.

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Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts

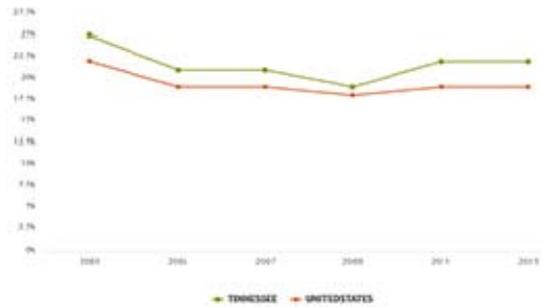
High School Graduation by Race and Ethnicity



High School Graduation By Race And Ethnicity

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org

Fourth graders who are chronically absent from school



Fourth Graders Who Are Chronically Absent From School

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

<http://bit.ly/2IKNENT>

<http://bit.ly/2ILPtK4>

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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