

ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

2019



THE SECOND LOOK COMMISSION

The SLC reviews some of the worst incidents of recurring child abuse and neglect in Tennessee. The SLC reviews cases of children from across Tennessee who have experienced a second or subsequent incidence of severe abuse to identify ways to improve the system and help other children avoid a similar fate. The SLC publishes an annual report of their findings. This document outlines key information primarily contained in the 2019 annual report. Additional information is available in the 2019 annual report.

Included Highlights

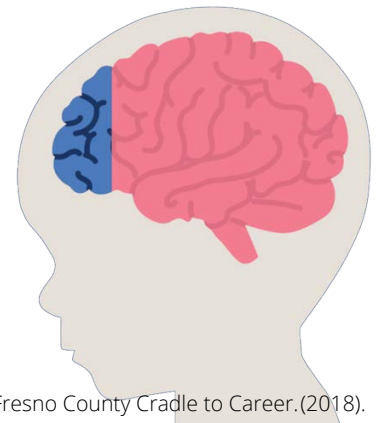
- Impact of Child Abuse
- Data
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Additional Concerns
- Actions Taken

Impact of Child Abuse

Childhood is a crucial time for brain development. In the first few years of a child's life, there are more than one million new neural connections forming each second. Every second counts, and every second a child is enduring severe abuse is drastically impacting the long-term health and development of both the child and their community.

90%

of a child's brain development happens before age 5.



Fresno County Cradle to Career. (2018). Retrieved from: <https://fresnoc2c.org/report>

IN 2017 ACES COST TENNESSE

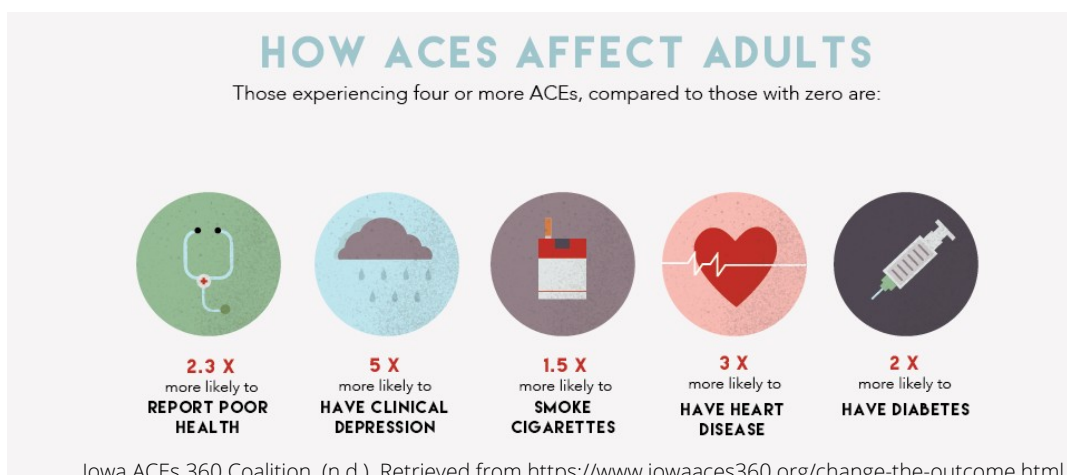
\$5,200,000,000

IN DIRECT MEDICAL COSTS AND LOST PRODUCTIVITY

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events a child witnesses that have impacts on their development and well-being. All types of abuse reviewed by the Second Look Commission are categorized as ACEs.

ACEs can create "toxic stress" in a child's developing brain, releasing harmful chemicals that can lead to lifelong difficulties in learning, memory and self-regulation.



At least 60 percent of Tennesseans have one or more ACEs. Due to the rapid brain development in childhood the most important time to intervene and mitigate the effects of ACEs is during early development. The brain is more easily able to adapt at a young age. If we focus our efforts on early prevention and intervention, we can decrease the rate of ACEs across Tennessee

2017-2018 CASE DATA

Department of Children's Services reported 555 children experienced a second or subsequent incident of severe child abuse in FY 2018.



100

75

50

25

TYPES OF MALTREATMENT

For FY 2018:



Drug Exposed Child

Lack of Supervision

Physical Abuse

Other Maltreatment

Sexual Abuse

0

Findings

Investigations & Compliance

- Fathers who are not in the home are sometimes not sufficiently engaged during investigations.
- Paramours were often not given the proper attention during investigations.
- Mental health challenges of caregiver are not always adequately addressed.
- Some attorneys may not fully understand DCS classifications.
- There are opportunities to better utilize case histories during investigations.
- There are delays inputting case notes into TFACTS. Those delays mean vital information may not be available when it is most needed.
- There continues to be a lack of compliance with and enforcement of No Contact orders primarily by family members.
- Although all adults in Tennessee are mandated reporters of child abuse/neglect, there continues to be a lack of compliance in reporting.
- Sometimes rural areas present a unique challenge to obtaining and monitoring drug and alcohol assessments and results.

Recommendations

Investigations & Compliance

- ♦ DCS and law enforcement should look at fathers and paramours with greater scrutiny as a part of the investigation and as a person of support/participant in family services.
- ♦ Evidence-based global assessments may be appropriate in all investigations and should be reassessed as circumstances change.
- ♦ Child Protective Investigative Team training regarding the meaning of the various DCS investigation classifications should be provided.
- ♦ A child's case history must be thoroughly reviewed and given the appropriate consideration.
- ♦ Timely entries into TFACTS should continue to be emphasized and monitored.
- ♦ When a pill count does not align with the prescription during a DCS investigation, appropriate action needs to be taken to ensure the child is safe.
- ♦ No Contact orders need to be clearly explained both orally and in written word. Courts, DCS and law enforcement must take violations seriously, monitor and enforce the orders.
- ♦ The general public needs to be educated about Tennessee's mandatory reporting requirements, which are some of the strongest child abuse reporting statutes in the nation.
- ♦ Coordination between child abuse prevention stakeholders and behavioral health specialists should be improved.

Findings

Education & Services

- Caregivers with drug or alcohol issues often relapse while their children are in their custody.
- Sometimes drug-exposed children are placed with individuals who do not have the resources to appropriately respond to their needs.
- Well-meaning foster parents sometimes encourage children to disclose their abuse in ways that could interfere with investigations.
- Recommendations from drug and alcohol assessments often did not produce positive results for the involved children and families.
- Child abuse stakeholders need to follow drug abuse cases longer to provide the necessary supports to the caregivers and children involved.
- Children can often be moved and placed in multiple locations throughout the investigation.

Recommendations

Education & Services

- ♦ Ongoing education regarding contingency plans for when caregivers relapse should be provided.
- ♦ Caregivers and foster parents need ongoing trainings and support.
- ♦ Child abuse stakeholders and behavioral health specialists need to ensure caregivers with drug and alcohol issues are receiving evidence-based assessments and following the recommendations.
- ♦ Stakeholders need to collaborate to develop a system to extend services for a reasonable time during rehabilitation of the perpetrator when appropriate.
- ♦ Providing necessary financial support and child care support for relative caregiver placements can reduce the number of placements a child receives.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Based on recommendations from previous SLC reports and actions taken by Department of Children's Services, the courts, law enforcement and other child abuse prevention stakeholders we have seen improvement childhood well-being in Tennessee.

75%

DECREASE SINCE
2014 IN CASES
OF SECONDARY
OR SUBSEQUENT
SEVERE ABUSE
RESULTING
FATALITY



134

FEWER CASES
OF SECONDARY
OR
SUBSEQUENT
SEVERE ABUSE
THAN IN 2016

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

- The State of Tennessee should research specialized approaches adopted in Tennessee designed to improve child safety in child abuse cases and build upon the successful approaches such as the Specialized Drug Teams.
- Prenatal care is crucial to childhood well-being and barriers to care should be removed.
- We need to ensure severely abused children are getting appropriate mental health and medical care.
- Properly implemented Safe Baby Courts should be expanded in Tennessee.