



The Advocate

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A newsletter on children's issues

October 2001

Needs of Tennessee's Children Go Unmet

Education led the way in cuts resulting from the budget passed this year by the General Assembly. Yet a continued lack of funding for the foundation programs of education, health care, and income support has kept Tennessee's children at the bottom of the list for all too many years.

Tennessee and Its Children: Unmet Needs 2001 lists the impact of the state's failure to adequately fund services to help children grow, learn, and get help when they and their families face problems. The book, the latest Tennessee KIDS COUNT publication, was printed using funds from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

These unmet needs do not just hurt children; they hurt all Tennessee citizens. Every dollar spent on quality early education for high-risk children saves \$7 in future costs from things like special education, school dropout, juvenile delinquency, and welfare dependency, according to an intensive study. However, in 1999-2000, Tennessee's pilot preschool program served only 600 of the estimated 12,000 poor 3- and 4-year-olds who needed the services.

As then Commissioner Alex Fischer, charged with recruiting businesses to the state, told a state House committee, "The most important investments that



we'll make are the investments in our children – the investment in education that will lead us into the 21st Century.... If I had to choose I would choose to cut my entire department out and fund higher education and K-12 education because I believe the future is that important."

The state's lack of attention to funding the basics, detailed in the book, has also kept the state's children from achieving what they could have in a state with a higher level of resources. Tennessee's K-12 education spending lags the nation, ranking it 50th, 49th, 42nd, etc., on various categories. Therefore, it is not surprising that high technology jobs made up only 2 percent of all Tennessee jobs, ranking the state 42nd in high technology jobs nationally.

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Needs

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Getting Up to “Good Enough”

During the last eight years of the KIDS COUNT national rankings of Child Well-Being, **Tennessee’s composite score has never risen out of the bottom 20 percent.** In some cases, the numbers needed to bring Tennessee up to the national average and even to the top levels are relatively small. If 23 fewer children died in Tennessee, the state could achieve levels held by states like Ohio and Alaska, which were ranked at the mid-point of the 50 states. Reducing teen deaths by 101 would have the same effect. The reduction of 162 child deaths and 181 teen deaths would raise Tennessee to the top of the ranking held by New Hampshire and Minnesota.

Tennessee and Its Children: Unmet Needs 2001 lists the numbers and percent reductions needed for low-birth-weight babies; infant mortality, child-death rate, teen violent deaths, high school dropout, and children in poverty. On one ranking, the number of children living with parents who have full-time, year-round employment, the state has achieved an above average score.

Reduction goals for each county to bring the state up to average and to the highest level are listed in *Unmet Needs*. See the tables on pages 2 and 3 for more information on statewide goals.

Children’s Unmet Education Needs

- ★ In a comparison by the Education Finance Statistics Center, both **Memphis and Nashville-Davidson County** spend much **less than comparable urban school districts** across the country.
- ★ Memphis’ per-child expenditures were 24 percent below comparable cities; Nashville’s were 19 percent.
- ★ Tennessee is the **only Southeastern state without a state-funded reading initiative.**
- ★ While no definite information about literacy in the state exists, estimates are that **from one in five (20 percent) to almost two in five (39 percent) of Tennesseans are functionally illiterate.**

Continued on page 3.

Required Reduction for Tennessee Based on 1998 Data To Equal National Average

Indicators	Low-Birth-Weight Babies ¹	Infant Mortality ¹	Child Death Rate ²	Teen Deaths by Accident, Homicide and Suicide ³	Teen Birth Rate ⁴	Children Living With Parents Who Do Not Have Full-Time, Year-Round Employment ⁶	Teens Who Are High School Dropouts ⁵	Children in Poverty ⁶
Tennessee Rank, 1998	46	36	31	45	40	18	41	32
Tennessee Rate, 1998	9.1	8.2	27	79	38	24	12	19
Rate for Nation, 1998	7.6	7.2	24	54	30	26	9	20
Tennessee Indicator Volume, 1998	7,008	635	280	305	4,196	346,000	37,000	258,300
Indicator-Based Population, 1998	77,334	77,334	1,071,011	376,965	109,859	1,446,889	301,395	1,446,889
Required Reduction in Volume	1,131	78	23	101	900	None	9,874	None
Percent (%) of Reduction Required	16.1	12.3	8.2	33.3	21.5	None	26.7	None

Source: 2001 KIDS Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being. The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Population Based on: 1) Total Number of Births; 2) Total Number of Children Ages 1-14; 3) Total Number of Teens Ages 15-19; 4) Total Number of Females Ages 15-17; 5) Total Number of Teens Ages 16-19; 6) Total Number of Children Ages 0-18.

Required Reduction for Tennessee Based on 1998 Data To Equal Highest Rank

Indicators	Low-Birth-Weight Babies ¹	Infant Mortality ¹	Child Death Rate ²	Teen Deaths by Accident, Homicide and Suicide ³	Teen Birth Rate ⁴	Children Living with Parents Who Do Not Have Full-Time, Year-Round Employment ⁶	Teens Who Are High School Dropouts ⁵	Children in Poverty ⁶
Tennessee Rank, 1998	46	36	31	45	40	18	41	32
Tennessee Rate, 1998	9.1	8.2	27	79	38	24	12	19
Rate for Top State, 1998	5.4	4.4	11	33	11	16	5	10
Tennessee Indicator Volume, 1998	7,008	635	280	305	4,196	346,000	37,000	258,300
Indicator-Based Population, 1998	77,334	77,334	1,071,011	376,965	109,859	1,446,889	301,395	1,446,889
Required Reduction in Volume	2,832	295	162	181	2,988	114,498	21,930	113,611
Percent (%) of Reduction Required	40.4	46.4	57.9	59.2	71.2	33.1	59.3	44.0

Source: 2001 KIDS Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being, The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Population Based on: 1) Total Number of Births; 2) Total Number of Children Ages 1-14; 3) Total Number of Teens Ages 15-19; 4) Total Number of Females Ages 15-17; 5) Total Number of Teens Ages 16-19; 6) Total Number of Children Ages 0-18.

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- ★ **Tennessee ranks 41st in the number of adults 25 and older with a college degree and 46th in the number with a high school diploma.**
- ★ The earnings of men with college educations have kept up with inflation since 1970; the earnings of men with no college degrees have, adjusted for inflation, have fallen by 14 percent for men with some college, 18 percent for those with a high school education, and 25 percent for dropouts (Rand Corp, 1997).
- ★ The 14th Annual Development Report Card for the States 2000, issued by the Corporation for **Enterprise Development**, rated the state's **Development Capacity**, which looks at clues to the state's economic future. On **Human Resource Issues**, the state received an "F," and on **Innovation Assets**, a "D."
- ★ **Tuition increases of 15 percent** were approved for undergraduates attending Tennessee four-year colleges in 2001-02. While the national average for tuition increases for four-year public colleges was 3.4 percent for 1999-2000 and 4.4 percent for

2000-01, **tuition increases for the same periods were 5 percent and 10 percent at Tennessee state-supported universities.** Tuition at the University of Tennessee Medical Programs rose by 43 percent between 1998-99 and 2000-01 (College Board, 2000), pricing poorer students out of the market.

Between 1998 and 1999, the average salaries for full-time faculty at Tennessee colleges had the lowest rate of increase for actual salaries in the Southeast. Inflation-adjusted average **salaries of full-time faculty at Tennessee public four-year colleges dropped by 2.4 percent**, the largest percent drop in the Southeast. Faculty at two-year public colleges saw their salaries drop by 7 percent.

- ★ Tennessee's flagship public university, the University of Tennessee, ranked 44th in the U.S. News and World Report 2001 national ranking of public universities, compared to top 5 rankings for the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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Needs

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Computer penetration in Tennessee is 11 percent below the national average, ranking Tennessee 40th among states in this category (TRA, 2000).

★ **Only one-third of Tennessee's rural residents own a computer.** The gap between computer ownership in rural versus urban areas in Tennessee appears to be decreasing, and now 37.5 percent of all Tennesseans own a computer. Between 1997 and 1998 the gap decreased by 20 percent.

Seventy-four (74) percent of people in Tennessee's prisons failed to complete high school.

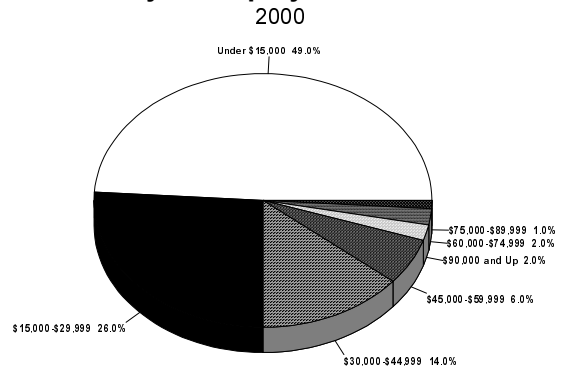
★ Tennessee is in the top 10 in crime categories, including **violent crime, murder, rape, and motor vehicle theft.**

Children's Unmet Health Needs

TennCare pays the hospital bill for nearly half of all babies born in Tennessee each year and can be linked with:

- ★ **Improved health indicators for children, including prenatal care, infant mortality, child death, and immunizations;**
- ★ Early detection of physical and developmental disabilities through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) requirements;
- ★ Improved dental care and treatment;

*Wages of Tennessee Employees Covered By Unemployment Law



Source: Tennessee Labor and Work Force Development, 2001. *Includes 98-99 percent of all Tennessee wage earners, including part-time workers and domestics. It does not include sole proprietors with no employees, and small farmers.

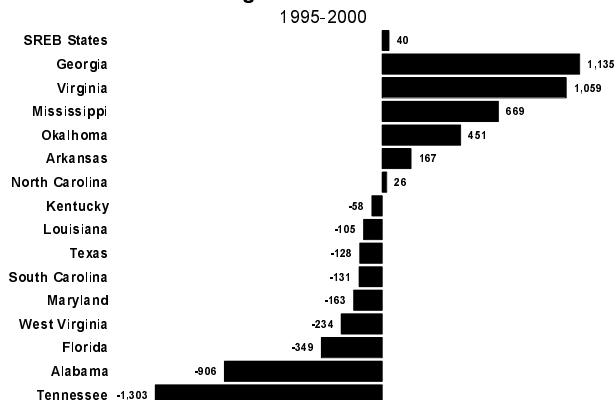
★ Early detection and intervention of mental health problems.

In 1998, only 10 percent of Tennessee's children were without health insurance, compared to 15 percent nationally. **TennCare is perhaps Tennessee's greatest success in addressing the unmet needs of its residents.**

Despite Tennessee's success in extending insurance coverage to its poorer citizens, **children in the state continue to rank low or very low on national health indicators.**

- ★ Only 10 states in the country have higher teen birth rates than Tennessee.
- ★ The *2001 KIDS COUNT Data Book* also revealed that infants born in Tennessee in 1998 were more likely to have low-birth weight (weigh less than 5.5 pounds at birth) than infants born in 45 other states in the country.
- ★ In 1998, African-American infants born in the Volunteer State were twice as likely to die in their first year of life than White infants.
- ★ The 310 deaths of children ages 1 to 14 are enough to fill 13 average classrooms in Tennessee.
- ★ Tennessee's teen violent death rate in 1998 was 46 percent higher than the national average.

Changes in State General Operating Appropriations Per Full-Time-Equivalent Student, Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities



Source: Southern Regional Educational Board Fact Book on Education 2000-2001. Changes represent dollar amount of change per full-time-equivalent student.

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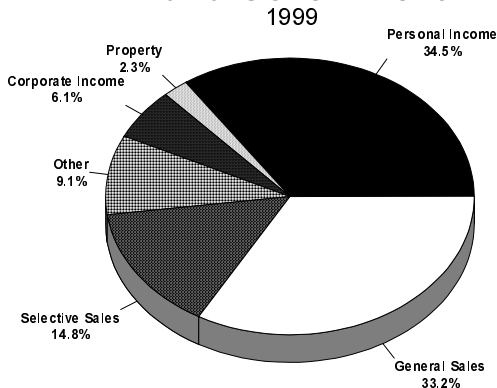
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Children's Unmet Economic Needs

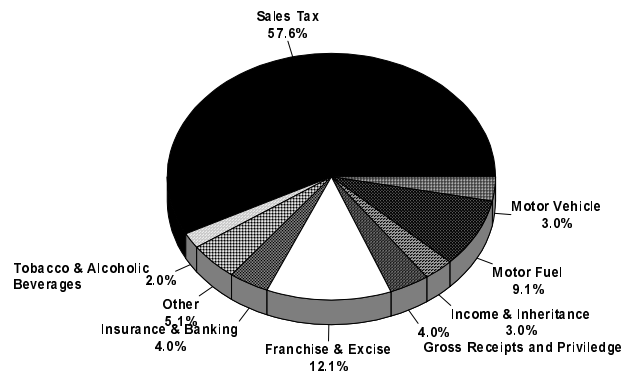
- ★ **Tennesseans, on average, make only 94 percent of the per capita income of the U.S. average, ranking 33rd nationally.**
- ★ **Higher wages also lead to higher rates of homeownership.** Homeowners generally enjoy better living conditions than renters; accumulate wealth as their investments in their homes grow; strengthen the economy by purchases of cars, furniture, and appliances; and tend to be more involved in promoting strong neighborhoods and good schools than renters (HUD, 2000).
- ★ Though Tennessee is among the more affordable housing areas in the country, fair market rents are still beyond the reach of many working families. **The average fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit is \$494 per month, unaffordable for 41 percent of renters.**
- ★ The Tennessee housing wage, the hourly amount workers would have to earn working no more than 40 hours per week, spending no more than 30 percent of their income on housing, is \$9.50 an hour, 184 percent of the federal minimum wage. A worker earning only the minimum wage would have to work 74 hours per week in Tennessee in order to afford a two-bedroom unit at the fair market value. Working 40 hours per week, a minimum wage earner can afford a monthly rent of only \$267. A three-person family receiving the

Illustration of How Most States Fund Government



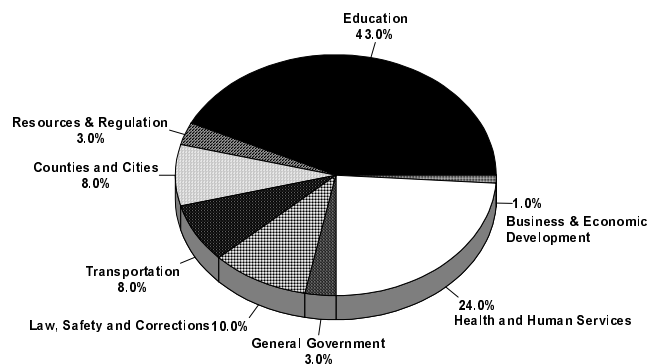
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Where Your State Tax Dollar Comes From



Source: 2000-2001 Budget Summary, State of Tennessee 101st General Assembly

Where Your State Tax Dollar Goes



Source: 2000-2001 Budget Summary 101st General Assembly

maximum TANF grant can afford a monthly rent of only \$70 (NLIHC, 2000).

- ★ **Tennessee ranks 50th in child support enforcement. Only 37 percent of female-headed households in Tennessee receive child support or alimony (KIDS COUNT Data Book).** Because women receive only 71 percent of the wages of men for the same work, children in single-parent families are often low income or living in poverty (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2000).
- ★ Tennessee provides subsidies for child care to some families with incomes lower than 200 percent of poverty. However, the subsidy pays only to the 70th percentile of market rates. Additionally, there are always more applicants than funds available to provide the grants. **Tennessee provides child care subsidies to only 18 percent of eligible children.**

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Dollars Spent per Child Under Age 6

More than \$200	Between \$100 and \$200	Between \$20 and \$100	Between \$0 and \$20	No Funds
California	Alaska	Arizona	Idaho	Alabama
District of Columbia	Connecticut	Arkansas	Louisiana	Mississippi
Georgia	Delaware	Colorado	Montana	South Dakota
Massachusetts	Florida	Hawaii	Nebraska	Utah
North Carolina	Illinois	Indiana	Nevada	Wyoming
Oklahoma	Kentucky	Iowa	New Hampshire	
	Minnesota	Kansas	North Dakota	
	Missouri	Maine	Pennsylvania	
	Ohio	Maryland	Tennessee	
	Oregon	Michigan		
	Rhode Island	New Mexico		
	South Carolina	New York		
	Texas	Vermont		
	Wisconsin	Virginia		
		Washington		
		West Virginia		

Source: National Center for Children in Poverty, 2000.

Tennessee's industrial age began, **the legislature eliminated the property tax and implemented a sales tax** designed to better reflect the new economic situation in the state.

★ **All of Tennessee's neighboring states have lower general sales tax rates; Kentucky completely exempts food from sales taxes.** Historically, leakage increases as tax rates increase, as the higher taxes drive more people across the border to make purchases. The ease with which one avoids state and local sales taxes is, in many ways, a matter of geography. Since almost **70 percent of Tennessee citizens live within 30 minutes of a state with a lower sales tax**, many of our citizens may easily escape paying some of these taxes.

★ **Tennessee workers who live in neighboring states already pay an income tax** in the state where they reside. If Tennessee had an income tax, they would pay it here and receive a credit in their home state.

★ **Tennessee professional athletes and entertainers pay the income taxes of other states** when they play there. Likewise, if Tennessee had an income tax, players who come in for games with the Titans, Predators, Grizzlies, and arena football or minor league baseball teams would pay an income tax in Tennessee based on the proportion of their income represented by games played in the state. The same would apply to entertainers.

Needs

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The State's Unmet Resource Needs

Based on the federal income tax returns, Tennesseans are:

- ★ 19th per capita in federal personal income taxes;
- ★ 18th in federal income tax paid per return filed.

This means **Tennessee funds its state government with a smaller percentage of its citizens' incomes than traditionally poor states like Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas.** Decisions about Tennessee tax dollars are made in Washington rather than Nashville or city hall.

This lack of state income prevents the state from funding programs to meet our children's needs. Instead, the finding and funding of solutions are pushed onto county and local governments. As a result, **local debt per capita is the highest in our region**, ninth highest in the nation. Services provided may vary greatly depending on where you are in the state, and many counties are served only by volunteer firefighters. Even though Tennessee has undergone years of economic expansion, we find ourselves in a system of **institutionalized disparity**.

Prior to the 1920s, Tennessee's primary source of state government revenue was a state property tax. Though agriculture continues to be a major industry in Tennessee today, before World War II it was effectively our only industry. However, as

The Advocate is published by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth as an information forum on children's issues. The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, an independent state agency, serves as an advocacy agency and information resource for planning and coordination of policies, programs, and services on behalf of the state's children and youth. The 21-member Commission, appointed by the governor, works with other agencies and with regional councils on children and youth in each development district to collect information and solve problems in children's services. To receive *The Advocate*, contact Fay L. Delk, Publications Editor, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, 710 James Robertson Parkway, 9th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243-0800. Phone: (615) 741-2633. Fax No.: (615) 741-5956 (fdelk@mail.state.tn.us).

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No person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, 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.

When Compared With Other States, Tennessee Ranked:

- ★ 49th in library systems;
- ★ 48th in total library operating expenditures;
- ★ 50th in home and community-based care;
- ★ 46th in percent of persons ages 25 and over with a high school degree;
- ★ 41st in percent of adults with a bachelor's diploma;
- ★ 50th in total education spending per capita; 49th in elementary and secondary education;
- ★ 45th in the "Condition of Children" index;
- ★ 43th in indicators of child well-being;
- ★ 49th in state and local taxes as a percent of personal income.

The complete *Tennessee and Its Children: Unmet Needs 2001* is located on TCCY's website at: <http://www.state.tn.us/tccy/UM-home.htm>.



Child Advocates Honored

The regional councils of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth periodically honor advocates who have gone beyond the usual professional standards in their concern for children.

Recently the Memphis-Shelby County Council on Children and Youth awarded the Mary Todd Advocacy Award to Gwendolyn Harbert of CCSA-Memphis.

The Southeast Council award recipient this year was Anne Gamble, director of the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga Children's Center, for outstanding service and advocacy to children, families, and early childhood education.

The Mid-Cumberland Council recently named Rhonda Simpson, Department of Children's Services Central Office and Davidson County representative, its Child Advocate of the Year.

Merril Harris received the Upper Cumberland Advocate of the Year Award 2000 and was subsequently honored by the Commission with the 2001 Jim Pryor Award.

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Meetings and Events

Council Activities

Northeast

Feb. 15, Council Meeting, "How to Love Your Teen," TBA.

May 10, Council Meeting, "Working With the Hostile Client," TBA

Upper Cumberland

Oct. 23, 5th Annual Networking Conference, Cumberland Mt. State Park, Crossville, TN, 8:30 a.m.-Noon CST.

Nov. 13, Juvenile Justice Training, Upper Cumberland Career Center, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Dec. 4, Legislative Breakfast, TBA. 8:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

Feb. 12, Quarterly Meeting at U.C. Career Center, 9:00 a.m.-12 Noon.

May 7, Quarterly Meeting, TBA

C-PORT Review Schedule

Oct. 1-5, South Central. Exit Conference, Oct 23, 9:30 a.m.

Nov. 5-9, Knox County. Exit Conference, 10:30 a.m.

Dec. 3-7, Davidson County. Exit

Conference, 10 a.m.
Contact (615) 741-2633 for more information.

Commission Meeting

Oct. 18-19, Nashville. Contact (615) 741-2633.

No meeting is scheduled for December.
For information on 2002 meetings, call (615) 741-2633.

Special Events

Oct. 17, Upper Cumberland Help 4 Kids Conference, Community Services Agency in Cookeville, TN.

Oct. 17-19, 24-25 TN Assn. for Child Care, Regional Training, Monroe Harding, Nashville, (615) 298-5573.

Oct. 22-24, Southeast IFPS Family Preservation Training, DoubleTree, Nashville, (615) 460-4414, IFPSConferenceteam2001@hotmail.com

Oct. 24, Lower East Help 4 Kids Conference, Blount Co. Courthouse, Maryville, TN, (615) 253-5993.

Oct. 24, TCSW Fall Training, Holiday Inn, Johnson City, (423) 224-1730, blarkins@preferred.com

Nov. 2, TCSW Fall Training, Holiday Inn Select, Memphis, (901) 577-2500 ext. 149, ssmith@porter-leath.org.

Nov. 8-11, CJJ National Training Conference, San Antonio Texas, (202) 467-0864, ext. 8

Nov. 9, TCSW Fall Training, U.T. Student Center, (865) 637-1753 or pamelajad@aol.com.

Nov. 9 - 10, Down Syndrome, Franklin, (615) 386-9002.

Nov. 13, Span-TN Individualized Education Plan Nuts and Bolts, 7-9 p.m., Kennedy Center, Rm. 241, Nashville.

Nov. 14, TCSW Fall Regional Training, Chattanooga Trade Center, (423) 209-6833, carlas@exch.hamiltontn.gov.

For more updated information on TCCY and child advocacy events, see the TCCY Web Events Calendar at www.state.tn.us/tccy/events.html.



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