



The Advocate

Vol. 12 No. 4

A newsletter on children's issues

February 2003

Child Advocates Identify Priorities

More than 150 advocates gathered in Nashville on December 18 for the first meeting of the Children's Caucus. With a new governor and a new legislature to address the state's problems in 2003, these advocates met to discuss an agenda to put children's concerns high on the priority list in Tennessee.

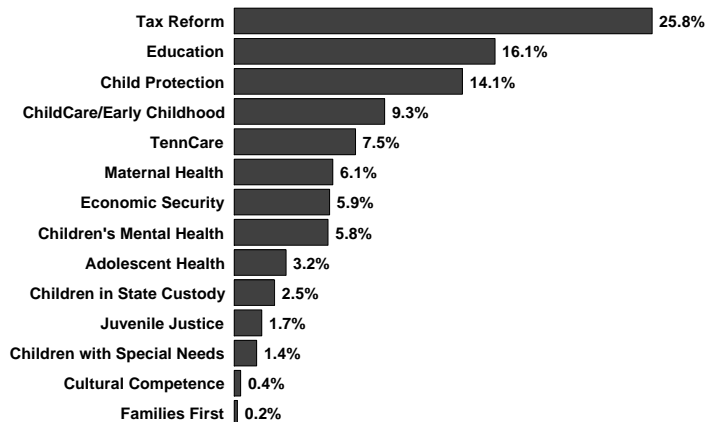
The advocates formed four discussion groups. Issues discussed by these groups were Use of Lottery Proceeds, Children's Cabinet Issues and Recommendations, Other Legislative Issues, and Key Issues for a Children's Agenda. The groups made recommendations about each issue. However, the recommendations reflected only the views of those participating in the groups. Some important issues were not address. For a wider point of view, information from the TCCY Priority Survey, which included responses from hundreds of people across the state is provided later in this article.

Use of Lottery Proceeds. Research shows that quality early childhood education develops skills children need to be successful in college. Important elements of quality include:

- ✓ Credentialed teachers;
- ✓ Developmentally appropriate curriculum;
- ✓ Family education and involvement.

Priority Survey

Total Responses 618



Source: Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Priority Setting Survey 2002. Note: Responses are weighted.

Therefore, the group recommended that 100 percent of funds in excess of those used for scholarships go to early childhood education programs and after-school programs, with perhaps a minimal amount going to capitol outlay projects for K-through-12 programs. If funding is limited, the discussion group recommended that consideration be given to using lottery scholarships after all students had exhausted all other scholarship and grant funding. The group also recommended that scholarships be based on a

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combination of need and merit and that the lottery scholarship not be an entitlement (promised to everyone who qualified regardless of total cost) since this would reduce the excess available for early childhood funding and potentially deplete money from the state's general fund.

Children's Cabinet Council. During the middle 1980s Tennessee's children's cabinet demonstrated the effectiveness of interdepartmental collaboration. The group identified the following issues regarding a Children's Cabinet Council:

Pros And Cons of Recommending a Children's Cabinet Council

Pros

- ✓ The more voices the better; variety of ideas and points of view;
- ✓ Place for **our** voices to be heard;
- ✓ Better collaboration and coordination of services;
- ✓ Focal point for questions and concerns; helps to narrow focus, decide priorities, and make plans;
- ✓ Ultimate decision-making body for clear leadership, implementation, and oversight;
- ✓ Increases political input and provides a forum to bring information to leaders;
- ✓ Opportunity for partnerships with commissioners;
- ✓ Oversight, budgeting, and evaluation of the effectiveness of services for children.

Cons

- ✓ Creates another layer of bureaucracy;
- ✓ If no clear "czar," issues don't get resolved;
- ✓ May have limited vision if membership is not sufficiently broad;
- ✓ Information from the Cabinet Council may not be communicated throughout the system.

Challenges

- ✓ Need clear leader;
- ✓ Selection of committee members is critical; advocates, parents, early childhood education, providers, etc., needed;
- ✓ Don't limit vision to state government participants; include people from outside state government: business, industry, and consumers;

Priority Survey Successful Programs/Strategies

Top 20 No. 1 Choices

	Percent
WIC	11.5%
Head Start	7.1%
Families First/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	5.3%
Child Care/Early Childhood Education (includes pre-K)	5.1%
Family Support Services	3.6%
Children with Special Needs	3.3%
Roads	2.8%
Maternal and Child Health	2.5%
Community Services Agencies	2.3%
Drug Abuse Resistance Education	2.0%
Department of Health (includes state and local)	1.8%
Adolescent Health	1.5%
Big Brother/Big Sister	1.5%
Domestic Violence	1.5%
Dropout Prevention	1.5%
School Nurses	1.5%
Success by 6	1.5%
Child Find	1.3%
Education	1.3%
Home Visitation	1.3%

- ✓ Should not just be about doing studies;
- ✓ Needs clear charge;
- ✓ Commissioners need to take active role;
- ✓ Avoid becoming a dead end with no accountability for follow-up and implementation.

Recommended Next Steps

- ✓ Look at other states for a model;
- ✓ Look at recommendations of participants;
- ✓ Don't forget early childhood, brain research;
- ✓ Don't forget private providers.

Priority Issues for Children's Cabinet Council

- ✓ Coordinate services;
- ✓ Collect and interpret data – data-driven, measurable outcomes for decision-making;
- ✓ Evaluation in place for Cabinet Council for accountability;
- ✓ Independent staff connected with the Children's Cabinet Council and Cabinet Council management role should be independent from the state

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children's agencies and report directly to the Governor;

- ✓ Needs direction from Governor's office;
- ✓ Establish team building for Council members;
- ✓ May need regional advisory group structure;
- ✓ Resources must be provided to support the work of the Council, i.e., parent travel to meetings, etc.

Children's Agenda. Prevention should be emphasized throughout all areas of services, according to the group that considered this issue. It prioritized 21 issues and identified child health, education, and child protection as the top categories of concern. Issues are listed below.

Child Health - Prenatal to 18 Years;

- ✓ Adequate prenatal care;
- ✓ EPSDT screenings required for TANF benefits;
- ✓ Early brain development focus;
- ✓ Better use Community Health Councils, and look for other councils to unite and energize;
- ✓ Reduce unintentional injuries in children.

Education

- ✓ State funds to support early childhood education;
- ✓ State funds to support infant/toddler services;
- ✓ Early brain development focus;
- ✓ Parent education and skills development;
- ✓ Reduce barriers to learning through:
 - School health teams (already a model);
 - Parent councils;
 - Healthy school teams;
 - Community approaches;
 - True parent involvement beyond fundraising;
 - Looking at well-being indicators;
- ✓ Prepare school systems for special needs children.

Child Protection:

- ✓ Fund Child Advocacy Centers in each Judicial District as recommended in 1987;
- ✓ Improve response of child protective services (CPS) to

child abuse allegations by providing community responses when appropriate and enhancing CPS Investigative Teams;

- ✓ Expand family support services;
- ✓ Reduce family violence and address the needs of victims;
- ✓ Include youth in decision making by having more youth involvement as equal partners on bodies that shape decisions impacting their lives.

Other issues

- ✓ Recognize that some children still need residential care and meet those needs;
- ✓ Make communities more aware of what is available and better identify continuum with open entry to system;
- ✓ Increase competency of staff and reduce staff turnover for child care providers;
- ✓ Expand before- and after-school programs and use churches or schools and community resources;
- ✓ Provide affordable high quality services in all cases.

Other Legislative Issues. Acknowledging the conflicting goals of advocates, the group encouraged the Governor and the Legislators to show they value children in Tennessee and advocates to be organized and active. Among those issues considered are those listed below, not in any priority order.

Better Integration of Programs:

- ✓ Need to better integrate services through programs that serve the same or similar populations, for example adult education, parenting classes, early childhood education, etc.

Family Resource Centers

- ✓ Lack of expansion in numbers and size of population served;
- ✓ Parental involvement not as active as expected;
- ✓ Advisory Committees need to be more engaged and "advisory."

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Issues of Top Priority to Tennesseans by TCCY Region

(Based on 2002 TCCY Priority-Setting Survey)

Issues	Region									
	East	Memphis/ ShelbyCounty	Mid- Cumberland	Northeast	Northwest	South Central	Southeast	Southwest	Upper Cumberland	Other
Adolescent Health	8.2	0.0	0.0	2.0	6.5	4.0	2.8	9.1	0.0	0.0
Child Care/Early Childhood Education	3.3	20.0	12.0	2.0	12.9	7.2	16.7	3.0	11.4	4.4
Child Protection Children in State Custody	19.7	4.0	8.0	29.4	12.9	10.8	19.4	9.1	22.9	4.4
Children with Special Needs	3.3	4.0	2.0	2.0	3.2	2.4	5.6	0.0	2.9	0.0
Children's Mental Health	1.6	0.0	4.0	3.9	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2
Children's Mental Health	3.3	0.0	8.0	3.9	6.5	4.8	2.8	6.1	11.4	11.1
Cultural Competence	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Economic Security	9.8	8.0	8.0	7.8	6.5	2.4	5.6	0.0	8.6	2.2
Economic Security Education Families	14.8	12.0	10.0	13.7	9.7	29.1	22.2	21.2	5.7	22.2
First/TANF	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Juvenile Justice	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.8	3.2	3.6	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Maternal and Child Health	4.9	12.0	12.0	5.9	6.5	1.6	2.8	12.1	2.9	0.0
Tax Reform	24.6	40.0	28.0	21.6	19.4	19.1	11.1	33.3	34.3	26.7
TennCare	6.6	0.0	8.0	0.0	9.7	10.0	8.3	6.1	0.0	26.7

*'Other' includes surveys from those whose work is statewide, and persons who failed to indicate a TCCY region.

Legislative Information, Updates Available from TCCY

Three Options for Receiving the TCCY *Legislative Report*, *Legislative Updates*, and *Legislative Summary*

Option 1: If you have Internet access at work or at home, all reports are available at the TCCY website <http://www.state.tn.us/tccy/legislat.html> or to receive reports by e-mail:

Type listserv@tsslan.state.tn.us in the "To:" area of your e-mail message.

Leave the subject line blank.

In the message area type: *Subscribe TCCY First Name Last Name.* (Use your own first and last name instead of the typed words "First Name Last Name.")

This should connect you directly to the list-serve account.

You will receive a confirmation message verifying that you are enrolled.

If you have questions or need assistance, call Steve Petty at (615) 532-1685 or 1 (800) 264-0904 or e-mail him at Steve.Petty@state.tn.us.



Option 2: If you do not have Internet access, but have a GroupWise address:

E-mail your GroupWise address to Steve Petty by entering his name in the "To:" area of your message. Then in the message section include the GroupWise address where you wish the *Legislative Report*, *Updates*, and *Summary* to be sent.

Steve will return your e-mail message to verify that he received it. If you do not receive a verifying return e-mail from Steve within two working days, please call him at (615) 532-1685 or 1 (800) 264-0904.

After signing up, you will begin receive the *Legislative Report*, *Updates*, and *Summary* through GroupWise when they are distributed.

If you have questions or need assistance you can call Steve Petty at (615) 532-1685 or 1 (800) 264-0904.

Option 3: If you do not have an Internet or a GroupWise address:

Budget constraints prohibit TCCY from copying and mailing these materials, but you can access them at your local public library.

To get access to all TCCY publications, go to www.state.tn.us/tccy.



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Tax Reform

- ✓ Tax reform and revenue concerns are not going away;
- ✓ Interesting to see new members of Legislature who want to manage the budget better – spending problem or revenue problem?

Child Advocacy Centers

- ✓ Need to expand state funding for Child Advocacy Centers.

TennCare

- ✓ Dealing with fallout from previous legislation;
- ✓ Providing health care for children who lose TennCare coverage in reverification.

Federal Highway Safety Funds

- ✓ Suggestion that more funds should be used to encourage highway safety by young drivers.

Funding For Special Education

- ✓ Current funding encourages segregation to meet special needs, for example at the School for the Blind.

Gateway Exams Issues

- ✓ Need other diploma options for children who pass course work but can't pass the Gateway Exams.

TCCY Priority Survey

One of the sources of information used by TCCY and the Children's Caucus to plan upcoming efforts is a survey of child advocates. Statewide, tax reform was perceived as the highest priority for change of any issue facing Tennessee's children. It was the top choice in five regions across the state and second choice in two more. Only in Southeast did it fall to third.

A Nashvillian expressed the concerns of many and said, "We have a massive gap in public concerns/realizations that services cost money. The well-off public does not seem to care that the less-well-off citizens need help or that the future of everyone depends on the nurturing of all children and adolescents. How (are we going) to open the minds of all the public?"

Tax reform is not on the agenda of either the Legislature or the governor; however, more recent

polls have indicated that the public is beginning to better understand this issue. Another respondent said: "Tax education achieved a lot this year, more than most thought."

Education in its many aspects was a focus of concern for many who filled out the survey. Education ranked second in the statewide survey and in the top three of concerns for six regions. Early childhood education and child care ranked fourth statewide and in the top three in five regions.

One respondent listed "special education teachers who actually work with the students instead of pushing paperwork for their departments" as a need.

Another said: "Education of lower grades gets a A."

In addition to the 14 issues listed on the survey, some people specified the need for programs to foster community and industry involvement in all aspects of child family issues and programs within the educational system to foster family involvement.

Other needs listed included better foster care services, prevention programs, and those associated with children in state custody when they reach age 18.

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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 (Fay.Delk@state.tn.us).

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“Families need more support services so that families do not get to the point of destruction. Better mental health services would help a lot, but other support services would also help,” said one respondent. “Each school needs a nurse on site who takes the time to get to know students and their families.”

Alcohol and drug concerns received high priority from a number of people. One said, “Substance abuse is a family illness that impacts all of society: workforce, legal system, economy, custody issues, et al.”

While many people listed generic programs, such as family support services and dropout prevention, as successful programs, at least 80 specific programs or agencies were listed by respondents. A variety of Tennessee Department of Health and school-based programs received commendation.

More than 750 advocates, members of the TCCY regional councils on children and youth and others, responded to the TCCY Priority Survey last fall.

Respondents included:

- ✓ Department of Children’s Services case managers;
- ✓ Representatives of state universities;
- ✓ Local and regional Department of Health staff;
- ✓ Community Service Agency staff;
- ✓ Mental health providers and advocates;




Notice

After July 1, 2003, TCCY will no longer print and mail *The Advocate*. Upcoming issues of the newsletter will be available at www.state.tn.us/tccy/advocate.html and by e-mail.



- ✓ Private social services agency administrators and staff;
- ✓ Public school administrators and educators.

Geographically, respondents spanned the state, from the mountains to the Mississippi. Each of the nine TCCY regions across the state was represented.

The surveys showed the level of cooperation and support that frequently occurs among children’s services providers. A representative of the Department of Children’s Services celebrated the programs offered by the health department. Another respondent singled out the White County youth service officer for her efforts to help families solve problems and keep children out of the court system. 

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Meetings and Events

Council Activities

East Tennessee

April tba, Meeting: Juvenile Justice Forum, Knox County Health Department, 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.
 May 7, Meeting: Awards and Officers, Knox County Health Department, 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Memphis-Shelby

Mar. 20, 12th Annual Spring Conference, University of Memphis Fogelman Center, 7:30 a.m. – 2:45 p.m..

Northeast

May 9, Quarterly Council Meeting, Kingsport.

Upper Cumberland

April tba, Juvenile Justice Training, Nashville Community College, Cookeville.
 May tba, Child Care Collaborative Conference, at TTU in Cookeville. Contact Suzanne Rymer srymer@tntech.edu.

Children's Advocacy Days

Mar. 18-19, TCCY Children's Advocacy

Days, War Memorial Auditorium. For more information, contact (615) 741-2633.

Mar. 19, Children's Caucus Meeting, War Memorial, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Commission Meetings

May 22-23, Nashville.
 July 31-Aug. 1, Nashville.

JAIBG, Federal Formula Grant Application Training

Mar. 25-26, 1800 McCallie, Chattanooga.
 April 1-2, 1900 Union Ave., Memphis.
 April 3-4, 225 Martin Luther King Drive, Jackson.

DMC Task Force

April 22, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Nashville. Call (615) 532-1581.

CPORT Schedule

March 24-28, East Tennessee Region. Exit Conference: April 10, 10 a.m.
 April 21-25, Mid-Cumberland Region. Exit Conference tba.

Special Events

Mar. 12-14, TACC Supervision and Leadership Institute, Scarritt-Bennett Center, Nashville, (615) 385-4433 or jmccaskill@tnchildren.org. Nonmember fees, \$25.
 April 30 – May 2, Interdisciplinary Leadership Training in Obesity Prevention & Intervention for Children with Special Health Care Needs. Memphis, UT Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities, (901) 448-6589, (888) 572-2249, www.utmem.edu/bcdd/obesity/wkshp.html, or jbittle@utmem.edu.
 May 4-6, Suicide Prevention Network Statewide Conference 2003, (615) 298-3359 or sridgwaytn@aol.com.
 June 3-5, Effective Supervisory Practice: Course II, Cambridge, Mass. For more information contact (202) 942-0308 or www.cwla.org.

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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