



Advocate

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New Attention to Youth Status Offenders

Two publications released in December call for improved responses to youth status offenders. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) released National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses on Dec. 5, and, a few days later, the Vera Institute of Justice released From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses.

The Vera Institute report describes status offenses (truancy, running away, unruly behavior, etc., which would not be crimes if done by an adult) and their prevalence, observing that numbers of court cases have been dropping since the early 2000s. Families in crisis, the report says, “require a faster response and a different kind of response than courts and the juvenile justice system as a whole can offer.” This report lists five principles for community response: diversion from court, immediate response, a triage process to assess needs, accessible and effective services, and ongoing internal assessment. This report is available at <http://bit.ly/1hKT1Fx>.

The National Standards provide a detailed handbook for the many players in the juvenile justice system. CJJ is a national network of state advisory groups (SAG) for the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and other juvenile justice experts and advocates. TCCY, the SAG for Tennessee, monitors deinstitutionalization of status offenders as youth charged with status offenses cannot be held for longer than 24 hours unless specific conditions are met. (However, the Vera Institute reports thousands across the nation spend time in detention.) The CJJ Standards report lists best practices to divert youth entirely from the delinquency system by promoting the most appropriate services for families and the least restrictive placement options for status offending youth. TCCY has endorsed the CJJ standards, which are available at <http://bit.ly/1cx6dtJ>.

TCCY Recommendations for FY2014-15 Budget

Each year TCCY makes recommendations regarding the state budget to the governor, legislators and policymakers. The agency is required by law to “review and analyze the proposed [state] budget.” Recognizing Tennessee has created public-private partnerships to implement an essential “infrastructure” of basic supports and services for children and families through systems from health to juvenile justice, the recommendations pay particular attention to preserving this infrastructure. The eight-page document lists programs currently being funded through one-time only funding that should be a part of the recurring budget and identifies gaps in services and needs that should be addressed. The report is available on TCCY’s website at <http://www.tn.gov/tccy/leg-recommend.pdf>.

Agencies Propose FY 2014-15 Budgets

Hearings on budgets for the fiscal year beginning July 2014 have been held. Each year the governor collects information from state agencies and then makes decisions about what will be included in the administration’s final state budget, which is then considered by the Legislature. Budget requests reflect agency priorities. Below are links to departmental presentations to Gov. Haslam.

- Children’s Services: Video (<http://bit.ly/1SK9PO>); Presentation (<http://1.usa.gov/1uSoT6>).
- Education: Video (<http://bit.ly/1coHMyO>); Presentation (<http://1.usa.gov/1dTbvD8>).
- Health: Video (<http://bit.ly/1kgnbgH>); Presentation (<http://1.usa.gov/1iEaJMv>).
- Human Services: Video (<http://bit.ly/1cdyYlp>); Presentation (<http://1.usa.gov/1gb3qtF>).
- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Video (<http://bit.ly/1do1cbf>); Presentation (<http://1.usa.gov/1uRLaG>).
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services: Video (<http://bit.ly/18GgANf>); Presentation: (<http://1.usa.gov/1iEbdIE>).
- TennCare Bureau: Video (<http://bit.ly/18m456N>); Presentation (<http://1.usa.gov/18m896Z>).

Regional Council Trainings

TCCY has many faces. Among the best known are those of the nine regional councils and their coordinators. Four councils, Memphis-Shelby, Upper Cumberland, Southeast and East Tennessee, held events recently. Pictures of the events are shown below. See our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/TCCYonfb) for more details, photos and videos.



Sharing the News: kidcentraltn

Regional council and TCCY events, like those in December, are among the strategies TCCY is using to help the Tennessee Children’s Cabinet promote the state’s new information source for families, kidcentraltn. Parents may search for information or browse under Health, Education, Development (by age clusters) and Support categories. Information about state services is also available. Information appropriate to the season, such as sources of help for students during exam time, is featured on the home page. Find the site at www.kidcentraltn.com or <https://www.facebook.com/kidcentraltn>.

Happy Holidays from TCCY



The TCCY staff, some of whom have worked together for more than 15 years, share “family” traditions. One of these is providing holiday presents for children in Department of Children’s Services (DCS) care. Knowing older youth in care have greater needs and may be left out by people who want to envision the joy of younger children as they receive gifts, TCCY has chosen to adopt older youth. This year we share the holiday with a 14-year-old girl who has asked for music, fragrance and gray felt boots with fur lining. In approximately 10 years of involvement, TCCY staff have brightened the holidays for at least 18 young people. Gerald Papica, TCCY ombudsman, has facilitated this project since its beginning.

Mark Your Calendar

Dec. 18, Second Look Commission meeting, 10 a.m., Administrative Office of the Courts, 511 Union Street, 7th Floor, Nashville. Contact Craig Hargrow at (615) 741-1154 or Craig.Hargrow@tn.gov for more information.

March 11-12, Children’s Advocacy Days, War Memorial Auditorium.

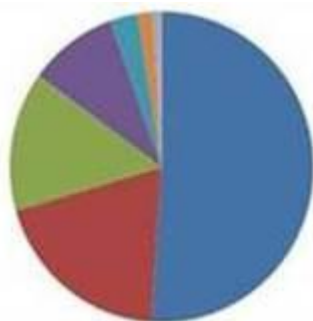
In the News

Department of Children’s Services Commissioner Jim Henry reported improvements in the agency to state legislators on Dec. 9 (<http://tnne.ws/Jboz6l>). The commissioner’s complete testimony is available at <http://bit.ly/1aSmjK3>.

Shelby County Sets Goal: Every Third Grader Reading at Grade Level. System leaders plan changes to assure students achieve literacy proficiency. <http://bit.ly/1diC3cm>.

Commonwealth Fund: Keeping up with Affordable Health Care Act Implementation. The Kaiser Family Foundation operates Kaiser Health News (<http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org>), which has provided information about the health care changes and the implementation of the the act’s most complex and wide-reaching provision, enrollment by individuals in health care exchanges.

Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts: Children Exiting Custody



Data categories, presented clockwise with numbers, are:

- Reunified with parent or primary caretaker, 2,729;
- Living with other relatives, 1,034;
- Adoption, 775;
- Emancipation, 508;
- Guardianship, 158;
- Transfer to another agency, 83;
- Runaway, 41;
- Death of child, 12.

The chart lists reasons young people left state custody in 2011. Data is from Child Trends analysis of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data. More data on Tennessee child well-being is available at <http://bit.ly/15alkVu>.

New Research Information

Rejecting Medicaid expansion for people with incomes at or below 138 percent of the federal poverty level (\$15,856 for an individual and \$32,499 for a family of four) will result in a net loss of \$2 billion in federal funds for Tennessee. The report says Tennesseans pay 1.9% of federal general tax revenue but will miss out on federal funds states expanding Medicaid (100% of costs for the first three years) will receive (<http://bit.ly/1fdFWRE>).

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Fay L. Delk, M.A.
 Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
 (615) 532-1584
 (615) 741-5956 (fax)
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