



# Advocate

July 2015

[Calendar](#)

[In the News](#)

[KIDS COUNT Facts](#)

[Research](#)

[TCCY Home](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[TCCY Newsroom](#)

[TCCY Regional Councils](#)

## Children's Health

In This Issue:

- [Healthy Children, Healthy Futures;](#)
- [Supreme Court Ruling: Affordable Health Care Subsidies Will Continue, Keeping Health Care Affordable for Many Tennesseans](#)
- [Preconception Health and Prenatal Care;](#)
- [Child Health Care...for Mothers;](#)
- [Breastfeeding Welcomed Here; Sleep Safe;](#)
- [Child Health Insurance Access](#)
- [Accident Prevention/Gun Safety;](#)
- [Health: It's Not Just About Doctors;](#)
- [State, TCCY Unveil New Website;](#)
- [Update.](#)

## Healthy Children, Healthy Futures

A healthy body is a basic human need, and provides a foundation for all other needs to be met. Better health also plays a role in economic success, as healthy populations are more innovative and more productive. As Tennessee moves forward, the health of our children will lay the foundation for the state's future successes. Healthy children begin with healthy parents, adequate prenatal care and a medical home to provide regular access to prevention and treatment.

## Supreme Court Ruling: Affordable Health Care Subsidies Will Continue, Keeping Health Care Affordable for Many Tennesseans

Tennesseans who signed up for health insurance and advocates were relieved after the Supreme Court ([King v. Burwell](#)) rejected the claim that four words of the 381,517-word Affordable Care Act meant only people in states that established their own health exchange marketplace qualified for federal subsidies. Without these subsidies premiums for many Tennesseans would not be affordable. Most of those affected were adults, as many of Tennessee's low-income children are covered by TennCare, Tennessee's Medicaid program, and Cover Kids, its Child Health Insurance Program. However, death of a parent and chronic parental physical and mental health issues have negative effects on the security, stability and health of children. Adults with health care coverage are more likely to have a

family doctor. Their participation in the health care system means they are more likely to be aware of their children's eligibility for health care insurance programs and to get care for their children.

An earlier Supreme Court ruling said the federal government could not require states to expand their Medicaid (TennCare) programs to people who were not covered by the program when the law was passed and did not make enough to qualify (138 percent of poverty) for the federal subsidies. The estimates of the number in this category in Tennessee range from 280,000 to 400,000. As written, the law called for these people to be covered through state Medicaid programs and thus not need the subsidies. They do not meet categorical eligibility for Medicaid and/or their incomes exceed TennCare limits (100 percent of federal poverty guidelines).

The Tennessee Legislature passed a bill in 2014 requiring the Governor to get its approval for any plan to expand Medicaid/TennCare. Governor Haslam proposed Insure Tennessee in early 2015 to provide coverage for those in the gap, but his bill failed to get out of legislative committee twice. Advocates for better child health hope the definitive nature of the Supreme Court ruling will encourage the Legislature to expand coverage to those who are still left out.

- TennCare, Tennessee Division of Health Care Finance and Administration, *Insure Tennessee*, <http://www.tn.gov/tenncare/article/insure-tennessee>.
- SCOTUSBlog, *Court backs Obama administration on health-care subsidies: In Plain English*, <http://bit.ly/1LI6Cwp>.

## Preconception Health and Prenatal Care

A mother's health is critical to her children's health. Ideally, women who may become pregnant should be aware of health issues that could be potentially damaging. They should also strive for good nutrition and a healthy weight. High blood pressure and diabetes can create complications in pregnancy, and women should address these conditions prior to becoming pregnant. A major problem in Tennessee is prescription drug use during pregnancy, an issue for both potential parents. In addition to maintaining good health, avoiding toxic substances and maintaining a healthy weight, men and women should know how their family health history could affect their children.

Once a woman learns she is pregnant, good prenatal care should begin in the first trimester and continue throughout the pregnancy. Common barriers to getting prenatal care as early as desired (or at all) can include limited resources, transportation issues and not knowing that one is pregnant. Only 60 percent of pregnant women in Tennessee in 2013 (fewer than two of every three) received adequate prenatal care, compared to 74 percent (three of every four) women nationally. Pregnancy testing and referrals to prenatal care are provided in all counties by the Tennessee Department of Health, and some counties provide a full range of prenatal care.

- Good Health Before Pregnancy, Preconception Care, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: <http://bit.ly/1JkmmSY>;
- Preconception Health and Health Care: Information for Men: <http://1.usa.gov/1HqwbPR>;
- Medline Plus, National Library of Medicine, NIH, Prenatal Care: <http://1.usa.gov/1GIbbE>.

## Child Health Care...for Mothers

Maternal health is even more important after a woman becomes pregnant. Health care coverage was expanded to include pregnant women through Tennessee's Medicaid program, TennCare, and Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Cover Kids. Income eligible pregnant women may participate in TennCare. To qualify for TennCare, a family's income must be 195 percent of the federal poverty level (<http://1.usa.gov/1GVG4DB>) or less, but a pregnant woman may qualify for temporary coverage based on her pregnancy.

Pregnant women with incomes up to 250 percent of the poverty guidelines may apply for coverage under Cover Kids.

- Applying for TennCare: <http://1.usa.gov/1GWOUkv>.
- Cover Kids Information: <http://bit.ly/1BUa6bL>; FAQ: <http://1.usa.gov/1JoGjlc>.

## Breastfeeding Welcomed Here; Sleep Safe

In 1952 the U.S. infant mortality rate was 25 deaths per thousand infants born. Sixty years later it had fallen to 6 per thousand. Tennessee's rate fell from 10 to 7.4 in the 20 years from 1991 to 2011. While the first 24 hours of an infant's life holds the highest mortality risk, with nearly half the infant deaths occurring during this time, the Tennessee Department of Health has two successful programs to help those who survive their entry into the world thrive through infancy and beyond.

**Breastfeeding.** Experts say if more mothers breastfed their babies, infant deaths would be reduced and child health improved. The World Health Organization recommends breastfeeding for the first two years of an infant's life. However, at 6 months, only half of U.S. infants are breastfed, and by age one, only about a fourth of babies are still being breastfed.

Despite its advantages, breastfeeding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not easy, and mothers need support to make it possible. The Tennessee Department of Health (TDOH) partners with the Tennessee Breastfeeding Coalition to recognize businesses that support breastfeeding families through the "Breastfeeding Welcomed Here" campaign. Because it is the law in Tennessee to permit a mother to breastfeed her child in any location, public or private, most businesses are already providing this level of access and comfort to their patrons. However, there are some businesses and employees that may be unaware of this law. This can cause an awkward and embarrassing situation for a mother who is simply feeding her child. The campaign's aim is for businesses to demonstrate their support for breastfeeding by making a commitment through a pledge, and then displaying a clearly visible window decal. (Thanks to TDOH for this information.)

The first week in August has been designated World Breastfeeding Week.

**Safe Sleep.** While improved survival in those first hours of life relies on advancing medical technology and skills, preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and sleep-related deaths requires simple, no-cost changes. The **Baby Back to Sleep** outreach teaching families to place babies on their back at sleep time has helped reduce the number of unsafe-sleep-related deaths. Unfortunately, way too many tragic sleep-related deaths continue to occur in Tennessee. The TDOH recommends the **ABCs of Sleep**. Babies should sleep alone, on their backs and in crib without padding, stuffed toys, etc.

- Breastfeeding Welcomed Here Information: <http://1.usa.gov/1LA7RN7>.
- Tennessee Infant Mortality/Sleep Statistics: <http://1.usa.gov/1Iq5PhN>.

## Child Health Insurance Access

While Tennessee has yet to extend health care insurance coverage to adults between 100 and 138 percent of poverty, children can be covered through TennCare and Tennessee's Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Cover Kids. More information about the programs serving children is available as well as the recommended health checkups.

- Tennessee Medicaid Information: <http://bit.ly/1duJ6nK>.
- TennCare Information: <http://kidcentraltn.com/article/tenncare>.
- Cover Kids Information: <http://kidcentraltn.com/article/coverkids>.
- TennCare Kid Child Health Care Information: <http://kidcentraltn.com/article/tenndercare>.

## Accident Prevention/Gun Safety

The national observance of Safety Month in June has just ended, but reminders about the importance of safety are still important. In the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control, unintentional injury is the leading cause of death for people ages 1 through 44, an age range including children and their parents.

Researchers find a disconnect between actual and perceived risk, so parents frequently protect their children from extremely rare stranger abductions but fail to protect them from more common auto accidents. Tennessee was the first state to require child safety seats in cars. Cell phone use is forbidden for those with learner and intermediate drivers' licenses, and texting is forbidden for all drivers. Tennessee also has effective boating safety regulations. Because of good highway safety regulations and improved auto manufacturing

standards, motor vehicle deaths have continued to drop, even as the number of highway miles traveled increased.

Firearm violence is a leading cause of death in youth and young adults from age 15 to 34. In Tennessee deaths by guns now exceed deaths by motor vehicles, according to a report by the Violence Policy Center (VPC). Loss of a child's life is tragic, but gun deaths and injuries of children are particularly heartbreaking, especially as two-thirds could have been prevented with proper gun safety and storage, according to the VPC. Other preventable gun deaths are deaths by suicide, around 600 deaths in Tennessee each year. The gun homicide rate per 100,000 has fallen since its peak in the early 1990s, but the rate of suicide has remained high. In 2012, the homicide rate was just under 4 per 100,000, with the suicide rate approaching 7 per 100,000. Suicide risk rises sharply in the ages 10 to 20 and is higher in homes with guns. Parents need to be aware of the danger, as their children deal with the struggles of adolescence. The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network has a Gun Safety Program to help reduce accidental shooting and suicide deaths.

- OSHA Safety and Health Facts: <http://1.usa.gov/1RQjOy0>.
- Overview of Tennessee Highway Safety Regulations: <http://bit.ly/1T1vMXP>.
- National Safety Council Infographic: <http://bit.ly/1duVbsX>; Information: <http://bit.ly/tccyad8>.
- Everytown for Gun Safety and Moms Demand Action, *Innocents Lost: A Year of Unintentional Child Gun Deaths*, <http://every.tw/1GWX8ZQ>.
- Violence Policy Center, *Gun Deaths Outpace Motor Vehicle Deaths*, <http://bit.ly/1dv2jp8>.
- Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network, Gun Safety Project: <http://tspn.org/gun-safety-project>.



## Health: It's Not Just About Doctors

Research has long drawn the link between hunger and malnutrition and school performance, as well as health issues. An understanding of interrelationships in the components of well-being has led to the acceptance of methodologies like systems of care, medical homes and no-wrong-door programs. The Adverse Childhood Experiences research opened many eyes to the link between childhood trauma and lifelong health. TDOH has built on that research to see how it affects Tennesseans. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has elevated the connection between poverty and child health as a priority. It identified five key indicators: Child Poverty, Food Insecure Households, Children Experiencing Food Insecurity, Poor Children Not in Preschool and Fourth Grade Reading.

Coordination and collaboration is a central part of TCCY's work to advocate for and enhance services to children. Increasing cooperation among and understanding of experts is a part of TCCY programs, including the Council on



Children's Mental Health, Youth Transitions Advisory Council and regional councils on children and youth.

- Tennessee Department of Health, *Adverse Childhood Experiences in Tennessee: Fact NOT Fate*. <http://1.usa.gov/1Krdxtw>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Adverse Childhood Experiences Study*, <http://1.usa.gov/1CHuDeB>.
- *American Academy of Pediatrics, Poverty and Child Health: State Advocacy Resources*, <http://bit.ly/1dvjqrO>.

## State, TCCY Unveil New Website

TCCY, as part of the Tennessee state government, has made major changes in its website. Agency staff believes the new site is easier to navigate and will continue to improve its look and usability. However, except for the home page ([www.tn.gov/tccy](http://www.tn.gov/tccy)), all links to the site have changed. Links to most state agency websites are affected by these changes. Please contact [Fay.Delk@tn.gov](mailto:Fay.Delk@tn.gov) if you need help negotiating the new website or have recommendations for its improvement.

- TCCY website home page: [www.tn.gov/tccy](http://www.tn.gov/tccy);
- Tennessee Department of Children's Services home page: [www.tn.gov/dcs](http://www.tn.gov/dcs);
- Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services: <http://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/>;
- Problems using TCCY's website, contact: [Fay.Delk@tn.gov](mailto:Fay.Delk@tn.gov).

## Updates

As of July 1, TCCY Associate Director Richard Kennedy takes over leadership of the Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee (PCAT) board of directors as its chairman. PCAT and TCCY have teamed together to advocate for children and anticipate even more effective efforts to reduce child abuse.



## Mark Your Calendar

(Additional events can be found at <http://www.tn.gov/tccy/calendar>.)

July 15, 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m., Second Look Commission Meeting at the Administrative Office of the Courts; 511 Union Street, Suite. 600, Nashville, TN. For information, call 615-741-1154.

July 23-24, Coalition for Juvenile Justice and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 2015 Juvenile Justice Youth Summit, Washington, DC. Info: <http://bit.ly/1z5uqA2>.

July 28, Tennessee Department of Health Injury and Violence Prevention Annual Injury Prevention 101/102 Training. Contact [mch.health@tn.gov](mailto:mch.health@tn.gov) for more information

July 28-29, Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network presents Suicide Prevention Symposium, "TSPN Leading the Way: Advocacy, Connection, Education," Trevecca Community Church, 335 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville. Register at <http://tspn15.eventbrite.com>.

July 29-Aug. 1, 2015 Safe Kids Worldwide Childhood Injury Prevention Convention, Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, Washington, DC. Info and registration: <http://www.safekidsnetwork.org/>.

Aug 1-7, World Breastfeeding Week.: <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>.

March 8-9, Children's Advocacy Days, War Memorial Auditorium. Contact [Richard.Kennedy@tn.gov](mailto:Richard.Kennedy@tn.gov).

## In the News

*Memphis Commercial Appeal*, "Haslam applauds Youth Villages program for former foster youths," <http://bit.ly/1IqOUgw>.

*The (Nashville) Tennessean*, "TCAP results: Reading scores drop, other subjects see gains": <http://tnne.ws/1IB3Wui>.

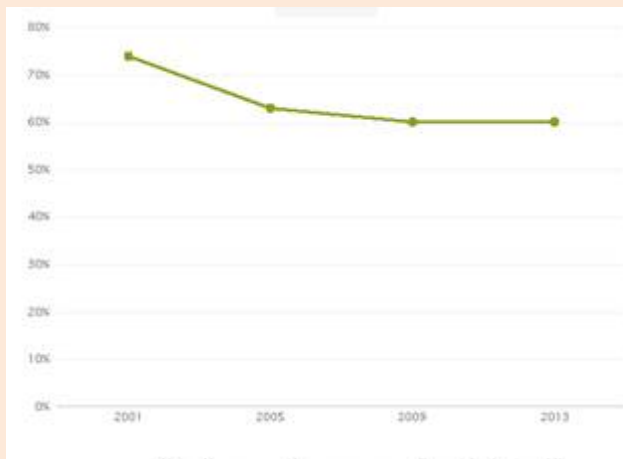
## Research Information

ZERO TO THREE, *State Baby Facts*. Report: <http://bit.ly/1CGNXIU>; Tennessee Fact Sheet: <http://bit.ly/1CGPAGK>.

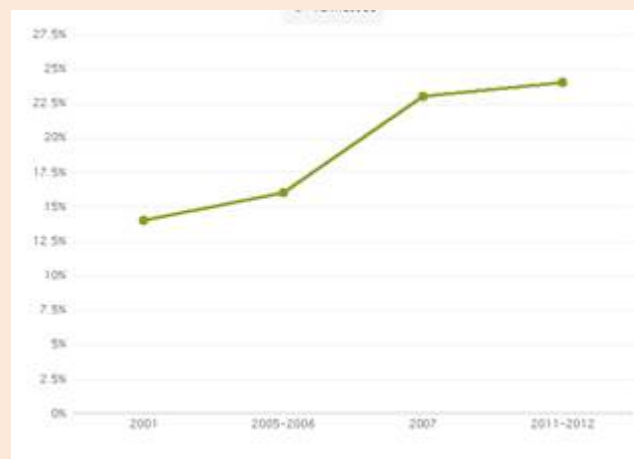
Violence Prevention Research, University of California-Davis "The Epidemiology of Firearm Violence in the Twenty-First Century," <http://bit.ly/1NsIVq3>.

## Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts

Adequate Prenatal Care



Children with Special Health Needs



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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