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Advocate

November 2017

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Achieving Permanency for Youth in Care Adoption and Aging Out of Care

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November Is Adoption Month

The theme of the 2017 National Adoption Month is "Teens Need Families, No Matter What" and underscores the lack of permanent homes for older youth. National Adoption Month was created by the federal Children's Bureau to focus attention on the need for permanent families for children in care. Over the past two years, the event has zeroed in on children ages 13 and above. As the Children's Bureau said, "Securing lifelong connections for these teens, legally and emotionally, is an urgent need and critical component of their future achievement and overall well-being."

2017 National Adoption Month, <http://bit.ly/2yg9W1j>.

National Adoption Month



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National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) is one of eight state programs piloting the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative. This effort, led nationally by the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.), with funding from the Children's Bureau, creates web-based training to build the capacity of child welfare professionals and mental health practitioners serving youth. The program strives to improve each child's well-being as he or she moves towards a permanent home and stability.

DCS staff, along with the staff from 12 contract agencies, recently completed the Child Welfare Professional training that improves how they address the mental health needs of children who have been adopted or achieved guardianship. The child welfare training consists of 20 hours divided into 10 two-hour webinars to be completed in four months, with three hours of additional training for supervisors. It nurtures understanding and detection of these issues and encourages working with birth parents to address mental health needs. Over 1,200 Tennessee child welfare professionals have completed the training as of October 2017.

Implementation of a more clinical 25-hour Mental Health Practitioner curriculum focused on assessment, treatment planning and evidence-supported interventions for working with children and youth, parent and guardians and families will begin in March 2018.

To learn more about how you can enhance your clinical skills and become adoption competent contact: Bonnie Beneke, bonnie.beneke@tn.gov, director, Training, DCS.

NOTE: Kaila Gilbert contributed to this article.

DCS National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI), <http://bit.ly/2xGXzZ3>.

National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative, Tennessee Update, September 2017, <http://bit.ly/2zWnUTg>.

U.S. HHS Children's Bureau, <http://bit.ly/2gQ8V5V>.

Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.), ***Introducing the National Training Initiative (NTI)***, <http://bit.ly/2zmlvFy>.

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Tennessee Adoption Support Services

Family and Children's Services, a Nashville-based nonprofit, provides supportive services for children in custody and families planning for adoption. During National Adoption Month, the agency is sponsoring the Second Annual Conference for Youth and Teens, with participation by families considering adoption. The agency partners with DCS and Harmony Family Center as part of the statewide **TRANSform** initiative to improve child welfare services through system wide, trauma-informed practice.

The Dave Thomas Foundation focuses on ensuring no youth are "unadoptable." In Tennessee, Family and Children's Services has a **Wendy's Wonderful Kids** grant, with locations in Nashville and Memphis, targeted to moving children who have been waiting for adoption the longest into adoptive homes. Family and Children's Services staff are among the 270 recruiters working on the project nationwide. Children referred to the project are generally older than 8 years, a third have had six or more placements and over half have been in foster care for more than four years. During National Adoption Month, the agency is sponsoring the Second Annual Conference for Youth and Teens, with participation by families considering adoption.

The **Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP)** helps by providing a system of supports for children and families both pre and post adoption. Services include individualized in-home care, crisis intervention, post adoption relief team building, support, adoption preparation classes, advocacy and community education. It is a collaboration between Harmony Family Center and Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc., funded by DCS.

Information, Family and Children's Services/Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Jan.dick@fcsnashville.org.
DCS Adoptions, Erika.Conwell@tn.gov.

Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP), <http://bit.ly/2zIJDYL>.

Family and Children Services, <http://bit.ly/2z87n1p>.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids, <http://bit.ly/2xGTaFc>.

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council Annual Report

The Youth Transitions Advisory Council, hosted by TCCY since 2011, brings together advocates from across the state working to meet the needs of and craft innovative solutions for children aging out of foster care and transitioning between child and adult service systems.

The report includes a list of accomplishments: a) Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) grant funding for housing for transition age youth through the TN Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant and b) the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) Healthy Transitions Initiative statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC).

The report also lists recommendations. These include improved information sharing with youth and between agencies.

Extension of Foster Care Services Participation

	Total Aged Out	Total Aged Out Eligible for EFCS	Eligible Population Accepting EFCS	Percent Accepting EFCS
FY 2014-15	932	731	353	48%
FY 2015-16	996	815	388	48%
FY 2016-17	935	793	349	44%

Youth Transitions Advisory Council 2017 Annual Report,
<http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/tccy/attachments/yt-ar-17.pdf>.

Information, [Steve Petty](#).

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"You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent" Campaign

[This video](#) might make you chuckle. (Or [this one](#).) While humorous, both videos address a real concern. Currently over [21,000 youth ages 13 to 18](#) are in the U.S. foster care system. While some parents may be disheartened by the challenges of older adoptees, [studies show](#) that adolescents who are adopted from the foster care system are more likely to finish high school, graduate from college and reveal higher emotional security than youth who remain in the system.

A project of the federal Children's Bureau, AdoptUSKids encourages adoption of children in foster care. It is also supported by the Adoption Exchange Association.

AdoptUSKids created "You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent," a campaign to address barriers to adoption and fostering.

AdoptUSKids tackles the need for adolescent adoption with a witty ad campaign that prepares prospective parents for the demands of teenage life. While the videos are humorous, they also underscore the fact that foster youth are similar to non-foster teens in the need for families and support, and in this way are no different than any other adolescent.

NOTE: Kaila Gilbert contributed this article.

AdoptUSKids Ad Campaign, <http://bit.ly/2z5HY8Q>.

Adoption Exchange Association, <http://bit.ly/2lyXMvx>.

AdoptUSKids, *Teens need families*, <http://bit.ly/2z7cVcw>.

AdoptUSKids, *13 reasons to adopt a teen*, <http://bit.ly/2gZgBXu>.

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Who Considers Adoption?

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, which has a primary focus on recruitment of adoptive families for children in foster care, released its fourth Adoption Attitudes Survey this year. The survey found an increase in reported adoption and awareness of adoption and foster care. Eighty percent of

the one in four people who have considered adoption have considered adopting through foster care. The percentage of respondents who considered every child adoptable (58 percent) increased from the 51 percent agreeing to this in 2012.

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, **2017 US Adoption Attitudes Survey**, <http://bit.ly/2lxBgmG>.

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Race for Results

Tennessee's future prosperity depends on affording opportunities to succeed to all the state's children, including those of immigrant families, according to the *2017 Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children*, released recently by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In addition to reporting on child well-being across various demographic groups, the new study focuses on the challenges faced by immigrants and children in immigrant families and the strengths they bring to communities. Policies to stabilize families and assure all children meet developmental goals are recommended.

Race for Results includes an updated index score for each state for children by race/ethnicity. The score is based on 12 indicators that measure a child's success in each stage of life, from birth to adulthood, and looks at categories such as early childhood, education and early work experiences, family resources and neighborhood context. The maximum composite score for each group was 1,000. Tennessee demographic group index scores and rankings compared to other states are Black/African American, 346, 31; Asian and Pacific Islander, 768, 24; Hispanic or Latino, 391, 39; and White, 625, 43.

The **2017 Race for Results** report is available at <http://bit.ly/2yh7J6F>.

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Update



Tennessee CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) named TCCY youth member **Annemarie Rainwater** as its 2017 "Light of Hope" award winner. Committed to helping children in care, she participated with the launch of TN Fosters Initiative and was the Youth Voice for National CASA at a national convention. CASA named state Sen. Ferrell Haile as its "Legislator of the Year."



TCCY is pleased to participate in a real win-win partnership with local universities, giving student interns an opportunity to learn about advocacy and our programs. This year we are pleased to have **Caitlin McCollister**, a UT College of Social Work student from Nashville, working with us. Caitlin, a Nashvillian, has been a teacher and educator and has an MA in education from American University.

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Mark Your Calendar

Nov. 1, Open enrollment for coverage under the **Affordable Care Act** opens on Nov. 1 and runs through Dec. 15. Enroll <https://www.healthcare.gov/>.

Nov. 2, 8 a.m. CDT, **Northwest Council on Children and Youth** Fall Conference & Provider Fair: "**Why Poverty Matters**" **Building Bridges of Hope and Change**," Boling Center, 2nd Fl. Ballroom, UT Martin. Information: Dana.Cobb@tn.gov.

Nov. 3, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. CDT, **Mid-Cumberland Council on Children and Youth** and Williamson County Juvenile Court present a **Legislative Event**, Williamson County Enrichment Center, 110 Everbright, Franklin. Information contact Susan.Cope@tn.gov. Registration required. No registrations will be taken at the event.

Nov. 3, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. EDT, UT College of Social Work and **Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare Fall Advocacy and Social Justice Conference: "Back to Our Roots: Re-Organizing and Re-Energizing**," The Foundry, 747 World's Fair Park Dr., Knoxville. CEUs include 3 in ethics. Contact: (615) 313-9980 or pfoster@tcsww.org. Register: <http://conta.cc/2xIU8TN>.

Nov. 8-11, **Tennessee Counseling Association Conference: "United We Stand**," Nashville Airport Marriott, 600 Marriott Dr., Nashville. Event website: <http://bit.ly/2xNBScA>. Register: <http://bit.ly/2wZgmlU>.

Nov. 11, 12 to 4 p.m. EST/1 to 5 p.m. CST, **Coalition for Juvenile Justice Virtual Youth Summit**. This event will provide an opportunity for individuals ages 24 and younger to learn more about juvenile justice and to share ideas for ways to work together to improve systems across the country. Register at <http://bit.ly/2ygnVAQ>.

March 13-14, 2018, **Children's Advocacy Days**, War Memorial Auditorium. Contact: John.Rust@tn.gov.

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In the News

Kliff, S., Vox News, **The lowdown on Tennessee's insurance markets**, <http://bit.ly/2i4TMBQ>.

DeWitt, D., *Route Fifty*, "**Children Caught in the Middle of the Opioid Epidemic**," <http://bit.ly/2z6aJPh>.

Punnett, S., and Rosenberg, E., *Washington Post*, "**For teens in foster care, adoption is a lifeline**," <http://wapo.st/2iO2CnL>.

Janta, B., *Rand Policy Update*, "**In Britain's Approach to Free Child Care, Lessons for the U.S.**," <http://bit.ly/2xHhYj>.

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Research Information

Lucia, K., and Corlette, S., Georgetown University Center on Health Insurance Reforms, **What's Going on in Tennessee? One Possible Reason for Its Affordable Care Act Challenges**, <http://bit.ly/2ii4j8W>.

McCue, M.J., and Hall, M.A., Commonwealth Fund, **How Have Health Insurers Performed Financially Under the ACA's Market Rules?** <http://bit.ly/2hBgg9C>.

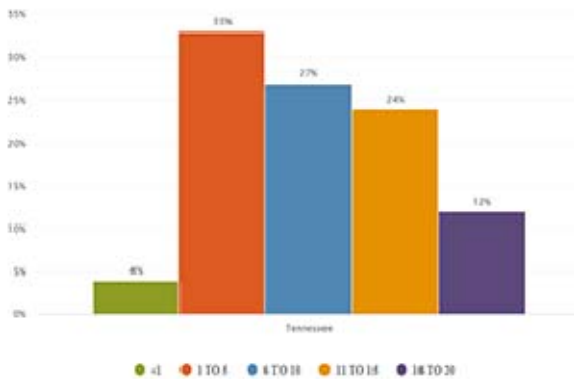
Szekely, A., Zero to Three, **Parent Support Services and Resources: Critical Supports for Infants, Toddlers, and Families**, <http://bit.ly/2i8jBkw>.

Oloff, P., and Theiss, R., Pew Charitable Trusts, **Children's Health Insurance Program Funding and Structure Vary Significantly by State**, <http://bit.ly/2yFjW5g>.

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Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts

Children in Foster Care Awaiting Adoption by Age Group

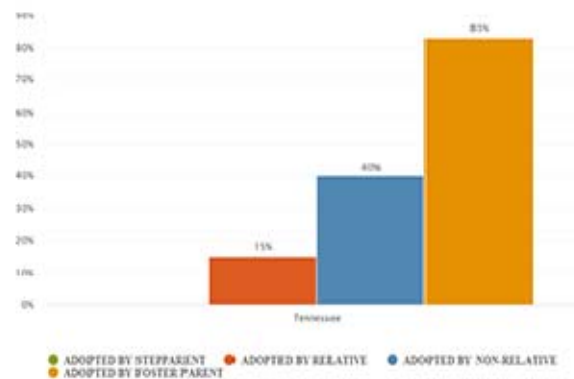


CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE WAITING FOR ADOPTION BY AGE GROUP: 5 SELECTED (PERCENT) - 2015

National KIDS COUNT
KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

<http://bit.ly/2kGvFKm>

Pre-Adoptive Relationship of Children Adopted from Child Welfare System



CHILDREN IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM WHO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY PRE-ADOPTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH ADOPTIVE PARENTS: ALL (PERCENT) - 2015

National KIDS COUNT
KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

<http://bit.ly/2xz4h7e>

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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