

Prioritizing Tennessee's Children: Our Promise to Future Generations

A REPORT FROM THE TENNESSEE FIRST LADY'S OFFICE





INTRODUCTION FROM THE GOVERNOR AND FIRST LADY

From the start of our administration, the health and success of all Tennessee children was made a top priority. That commitment begins at birth, continues throughout childhood, and follows on through continuing education and workforce entry. Tennessee's children deserve and have our unwavering support.

Making that support tangible required dozens of vitally important Tennessee government agencies seamlessly collaborating, pouring their hearts and minds into creating a brighter tomorrow for future generations of Tennesseans. By embracing new constructs such as the Adverse Childhood Experiences initiative and new goals including Drive to 55, our teams have prioritized today's children for the promise of greater possibilities.

We are proud of the work that has been done and the progress made, and we are excited about what the future holds for all Tennesseans.

Bill Haslam *Crissy Haslam*

Governor Bill Haslam

First Lady Crissy Haslam

Contents

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

EDUCATION TO WORKFORCE

ACES FOCUS

LITERACY FOCUS

YOUTH

EARLY CHILDHOOD

BIRTH

THE PATH

4

6

12

14

18

21

22

25

A path that benefits children benefits all Tennesseans.

Understanding that our state's future depends on the well-being of today's children, Governor Bill Haslam and First Lady Crissy Haslam have focused on the youngest Tennesseans since day one.

Governor and First Lady Haslam set out to forge a path for positive outcomes for every child in Tennessee, considering the whole picture – from safety to literacy, nutrition to educational opportunities.

On January 30, 2012, Executive Order No. 10 established the Governor's Children's Cabinet, co-chaired by the Governor and First Lady. Cabinet members included the commissioners of the Tennessee Departments of Health, Children's Services, Human Services, Education, Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, and the Director of TennCare. The Children's Cabinet was led by Director, Jude White.

This unified Cabinet convened with bold intentions: Breaking down barriers for Tennessee children and clearing a path to a brighter tomorrow. Together, they did just that.

The following report chronicles the strides made on behalf of Tennessee children during the Haslam Administration.

ONE PATH, MANY AGENCIES

For Tennessee to thrive, its children must flourish. State departments and agencies listed below collaborated on a holistic approach to child well-being.

Department of Human Services
Commissioner Danielle Barnes

Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Commissioner Marie Williams

Department of Health
Commissioner John Dreyzehner, M.D.

Division of TennCare
Director/CEO Wendy Long, MD, MPH

Department of Children's Services
Commissioner Bonnie Hommrich

Department of Education
Commissioner Candice McQueen

Tennessee State Library and Archives

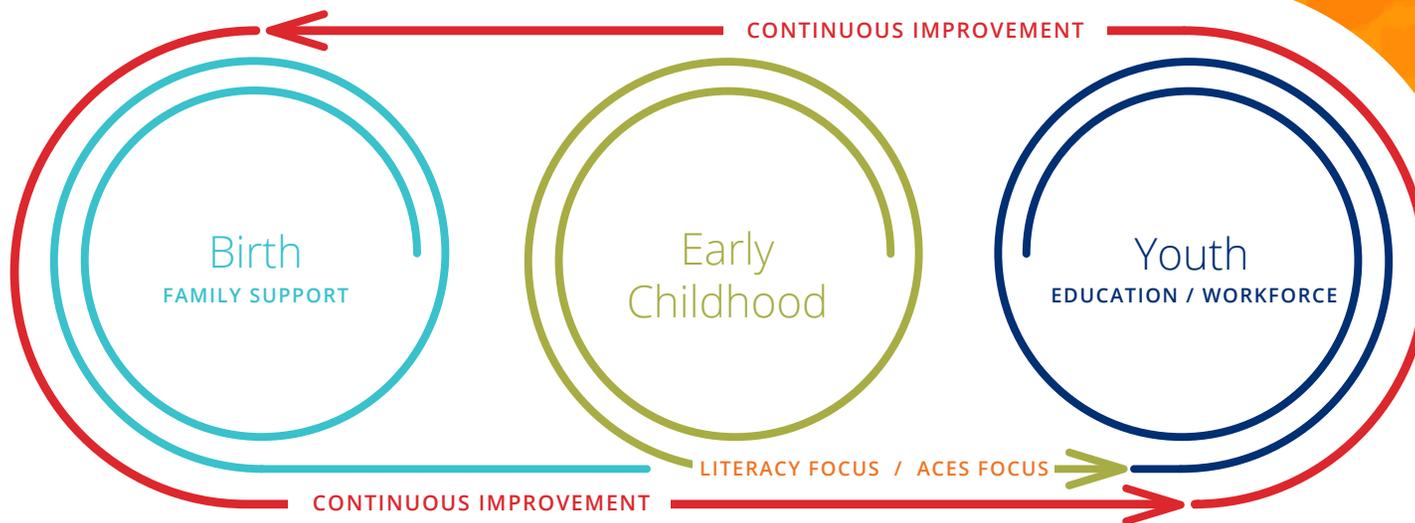
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
Executive Director Richard Kennedy

The path

Today, state agencies collaborate to serve children and families at all stages of development. The following pages detail Tennessee's vital programs and inroads for young people - from birth to adulthood.

"It takes all of us working in concert to produce the greatest results for Tennessee's future generations. I am proud of our efforts in each department of state government to work together to take a holistic approach to supporting the development of healthy children and families."

— FIRST LADY CRISSY HASLAM
Children's Advocacy Days, March 2018





Birth

From the moment a baby is born, Tennessee agencies are at work protecting the child and equipping parents.

It starts with keeping newborns alive. For the past eight years, the State of Tennessee has worked to reduce infant mortality. The Department of Health has worked to reduce infant deaths through the following measures:

- Distributing approximately **80,000 safe sleep books annually**
- Launching **BEST for Babies** to engage hospitals in infant mortality reduction efforts by promoting breastfeeding and safe sleep practices, as well as avoiding early elective deliveries
- Equipping first responders to provide direct-on-scene-education to families with unsafe sleep environments – **serving 1,516 families since 2014**
- **Incorporating a safe sleep module** in Women, Infants and Children (WIC) educational offerings
- Ensuring that **100% of child deaths are reviewed** by local jurisdictions

NEW SCREENING
PROGRAMS ADDED
IN RECENT YEARS:

Critical Congenital
Heart Disease (2013)

Severe combined
immunodeficiency (2015)

Lysosomal storage
diseases in (2017)

X-linked
Adrenoleukodystrophy
in (2018)



The Department of Health has strengthened core **newborn screening** with tests for hearing and heart disease, and a dried blood spot for further testing. As of 2017, 99.5% of all infants received at least one required screening and 95.8% infants received all three.

The national addiction crisis and accompanying **Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome** leaves more to consider than standard newborn screenings cover. In response to the epidemic, TN became the first state to implement real-time surveillance to enable cross sector response.

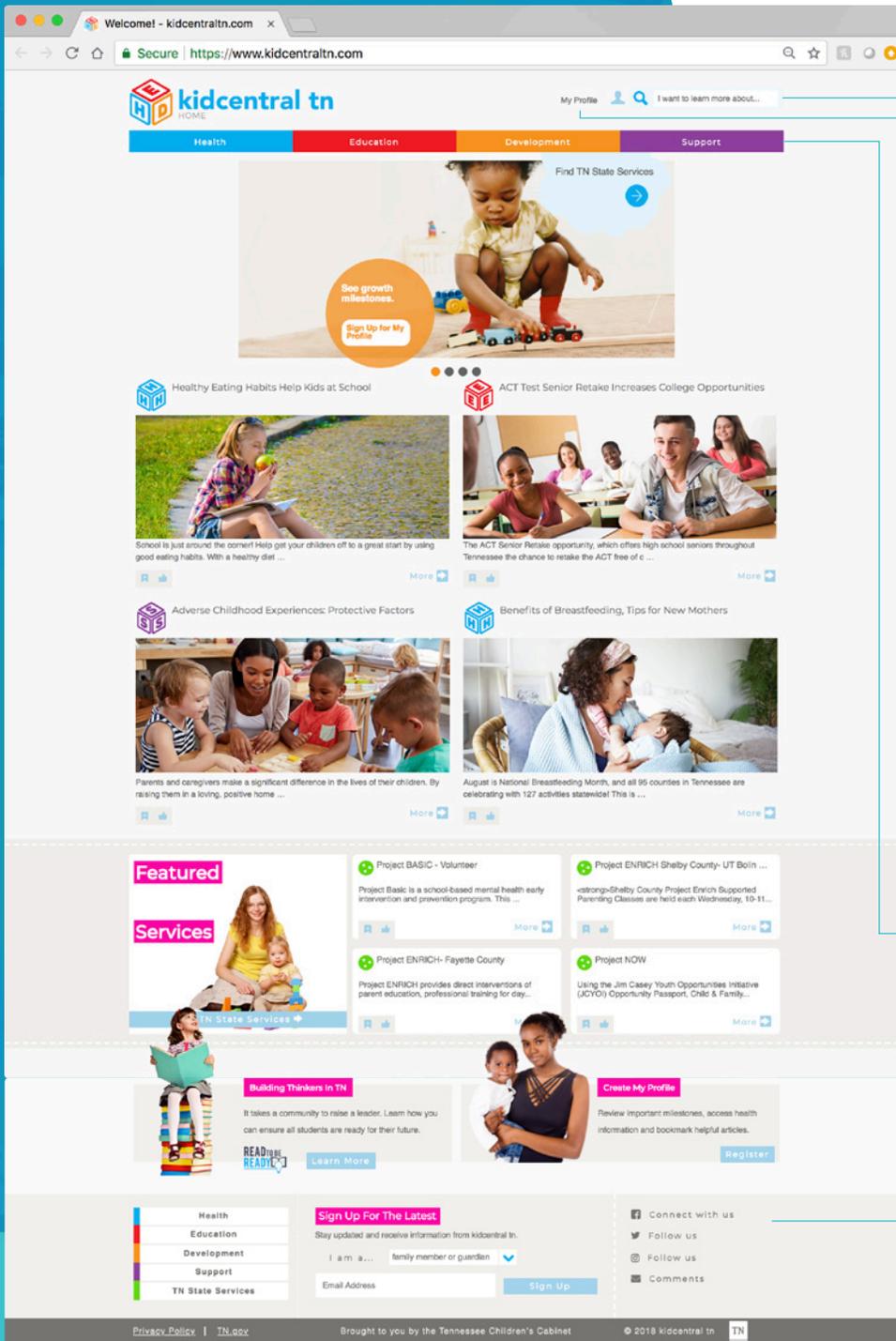
The state also expanded access to contraceptives for women

including those struggling with addiction, and access to immediate post-partum voluntary, reversible, long-acting contraception for those covered by TennCare or the State Employee Benefit Plan. These efforts have served as models for other states.

In 2017, Tennessee passed legislation to create the **“Zero To Three Court Initiative”** to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, and families involved in the child welfare system. Focusing on a child’s first three years, the program uses the science of early brain development to improve

outcomes. This involves coordinated efforts from Juvenile Court, the Department of Children’s Services, and community resources. **The Safe Babies Court Team™ (SBCT)** approach is the basis for the initiative. Sites are operational in Davidson and Grundy Counties, with others slated to open in 2019.





The Governor's Children's Cabinet created [KidCentralTN.com](https://www.kidcentraltn.com), a one-stop shop for Tennessee families. With content from various state departments, the site helps families find what they need quickly and easily. Features include the following:

- **Searchable directory** of state-operated and state-funded services

- **Customizable "My Profile" section** with age-based developmental milestones

- **Information** about health, education, development, and support

- **Social media and email alerts** sharing the latest state news

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Along with the focus on newborns, state agencies have worked to offer all families increased, enhanced resources. With an intentional focus on offering services and opportunities for both parents and children, our approach is called “2 Gen.”

The Haslam administration’s efforts have also strengthened supports such as evidence-based home visiting (EBHV). EBHV is proven to prevent and mitigate adverse childhood experiences; improve maternal and newborn health; increase school readiness; and decrease rates of domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect. Annually, more than 2,700 Tennessee families receive EBHV services.

To maximize visit effectiveness, the Home Visiting Leadership Alliance brings together home-visiting leaders in Tennessee for networking, information sharing, and collaboration. The Alliance aims to strengthen this vital two-generation service.

For FY 2019, state home-visiting funding through the Department of Health was restored to pre-recession levels.

To improve the health and well-being of the most vulnerable children, the Department of Health has initiated the Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee (CHANT). This approach engages high risk families and children with a multi-disciplinary team that helps families improve their access to care, increase screening, and better coordinate health services.

Since October 2016, the Department of Human Services has partnered with the Northeast Tennessee Nurse Family Partnership (NET NFP) to serve low-income, first-time mothers through nurse home-visitation services from early pregnancy through the child’s second year.

All Tennessee county health departments now offer smoking cessation coaching to pregnant women. Incentives include diaper vouchers for those who quit smoking.

NET NFP OPERATES IN
EIGHT COUNTIES AND HAS
ENROLLED 66 MOTHERS,
WITH PROMISING RESULTS:



More than 80% of participating mothers receive prenatal care within the first trimester of pregnancy, and all receive care during the second trimester



Two participants were saved from disastrous high blood pressure situations requiring quick hospitalizations, caesarean sections, and additional infant care



85% of participating mothers opted to breastfeed

Breastfeeding reduces infant mortality, prevents obesity, and encourages maternal-infant bonding. Since 2011, the Department of Health has taken numerous measures to advocate for breastfeeding:

- **Launching a breastfeeding hotline in 2013**, which now answers more than 500 calls per month. This program is a national model for its real-time, round-the-clock advice from lactation consultants.
- **Offering 20 hours of free continuing education** on breastfeeding for clinical professionals
- **Recognizing more than 1,000 businesses across the state for creating safe spaces** through the Breastfeeding Welcomed Here initiative

Since implementing these programs, Tennessee has seen a steep rise in breastfeeding. In 2016, 79.8% of Tennessee infants born were breastfed, a 20% increase since 2010. According to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the rate of breastfeeding in Tennessee is slightly above the national average. In 2014, 57% of Tennessee babies were still nursing at six months compared to the national average of 55%.

The Department of Health's WIC program provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and food vouchers to more than 140,000 low-income women and children each month. In response to those initiatives,

obesity rates among Tennessee children participating in WIC (aged two to four) have declined from 15.3% in 2012 to 14.9% in 2014.

In recent years, **Tennessee Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education (SNAP Ed)** agencies have expanded programs to combat the childhood obesity epidemic. On average, the University of Tennessee SNAP-Ed and Tennessee State University SNAP-Ed reach more than 28,000 children aged three to 18 annually in schools and preschools, Head Start, after-school programs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and 4H Programs.

- Since 2014, SNAP-Ed has **collaborated with local school districts in all 95 Tennessee counties** to educate children with monthly nutrition lessons, food demonstrations, and taste tests
- In 2017, social marketing outreach by **SNAP Ed reached more than 28,366 youth**

Working families and parents pursuing post-secondary education are eligible for childcare support through the newly established Department of Human Services **Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance Program**. This program supports eligible families with financial assistance to foster self-sufficiency and promote positive child development. As of March 2018, 8,127 children were enrolled.

In 2016, 79.8% of Tennessee infants born were breastfed, a 20% increase since 2010.





Early childhood

In a child's most formative years, Tennessee programs ensure stability and support early cognitive development.

The intricate architecture of the human brain is constructed in a process that begins before birth. Early experiences literally shape how the brain is built, establishing either a sturdy or fragile foundation for future development and behavior. The prosperity of any society depends on its ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation – from the very beginning.

Early childhood engagement and access to support are the keys to helping young Tennesseans thrive. One way to prepare children for lifelong learning is through reading.

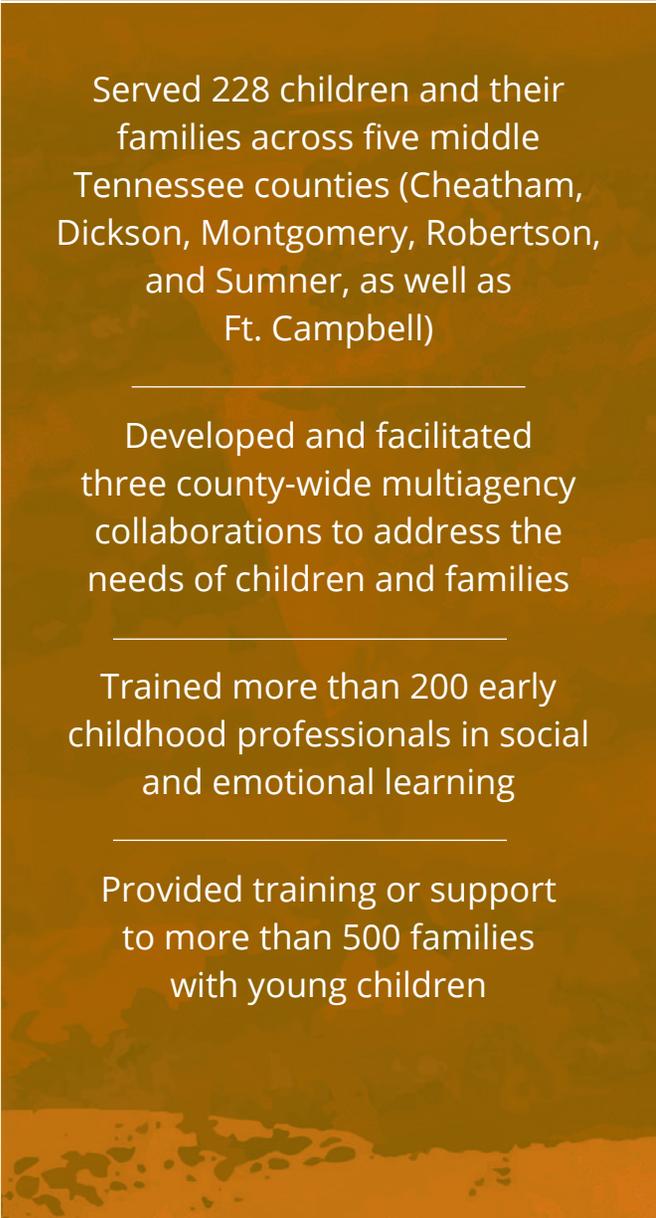
There's no better example of providing a firm foundation in literacy than the **Governor's Books from Birth Foundation (GBBF)**, a partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and statewide county affiliates, which builds a foundation for reading and learning through books for Tennessee's children. All children from birth to age five are eligible to receive books at no cost to families. Nearly 70% of eligible children are currently enrolled in the program.

GBBF is working with state agencies toward a shared goal of having 75% of third graders be proficient readers by 2025 with the Department of Education-led **Read to Be Ready campaign**.



ECN PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS

(2 0 1 0 - 2 0 1 6)



GBBF also partners with the Department of Health on the **Welcome Baby program**, through which every family of a newborn is mailed a letter signed by the Governor and First Lady that include a GBBF enrollment brochure and information on dozens of programs and opportunities to optimize the health of newborns and families. The Birthing Hospital is another partnership where new parents are encouraged to enroll in GBBF before they leave the hospital.

In 2016, GBBF and the Department of Human Services launched a partnership to register age-eligible children of families receiving childcare financial assistance to receive free books. As of July 2018, the Tennessee Department of Human Services has enrolled 23,000 children through the GBBF partnership.

Additionally, in October 2017, GBBF was enhanced to share information about resources and activities related to each month's book.

The effects of GBBF and the Imagination Library are tangible: children are more prepared for school and have stronger reading skills and families—and communities—connect and bond over books.

Overall well-being is critical for the type of brain development that prepares children to succeed. **The Early Connections Network (ECN)** provides vital care for young children (ages birth to five) with social, emotional, and behavioral needs. ECN also works with children and families of military and veterans.

Additionally, **Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health)** promotes the wellness of children ages birth to eight by addressing physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. The Early Success Coalition (ESC) in Memphis was the first to implement Project LAUNCH with a five year grant that has grown into a model for other communities across the state. ESC uses a county-wide electronic data referral system, provides education and training opportunities for the early childhood workforce and is a key collaborator with private providers and state universities.



Served 228 children and their families across five middle Tennessee counties (Cheatham, Dickson, Montgomery, Robertson, and Sumner, as well as Ft. Campbell)

Developed and facilitated three county-wide multiagency collaborations to address the needs of children and families

Trained more than 200 early childhood professionals in social and emotional learning

Provided training or support to more than 500 families with young children



Youth

As children grow, education and well-being remain critical to prosperity and safety.

In 2007, Tennessee's graduation rate was only 72.6%. Our state has been on a path of rapid change since that time to overcome such a significant achievement gap.

During the Haslam Administration, Tennessee has greatly improved outcomes for students and promoted a robust policy environment to create and sustain change.

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2) was implemented as part of these efforts, first in elementary schools (2014-15) and then in middle schools (2015-16). The results were palpable:

- **Reduced by one-third** the over-representation of male students compared to female students
- **Eliminated the specific learning disability gaps** in racial-ethnic subgroups

RTI2 also helped develop a national model for teacher evaluation that takes into account both student achievement and student growth.



In the 2017 annual educator survey, 74% agreed that the evaluation system helps improve teaching, an increase from 38% in 2012.

The state also adopted rigorous standards in all subjects to prepare students for postsecondary education and the workforce. For example, the TNReady assessment measures aptitudes in state standards for English language arts, math, social studies, and science.

As a result of these measures, Tennessee was named the fastest improving state on the Nation's Report Card -- or National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) -- in math and reading for fourth and eighth grades between 2011 and 2015.

The state's 208 after school physical activity clubs promote physical activity, prevent obesity, promote socialization, and provide

adult supervision for kids who might otherwise be without.

In addition to these clubs, **the Gold Sneaker Initiative** has worked for nine years with licensed childcare providers to implement nine policies around nutrition, physical activity, and a tobacco-free campus. The initiative has designated more than 480 childcare centers as Gold Sneaker programs. The Department of Human Services plans to make Gold Sneaker designation a requirement for the 3-Star quality rating.

The Departments of Health and Education also partnered to pilot an afterschool physical activity program in four counties (Meigs, Hickman, Benton, and Sullivan) during the 2017-18 academic year. The partnership also added physical activity to the Read to be Ready programs in Lauderdale, Warren, Roane, and Blount counties.

Tennessee was named the fastest improving state on the Nation's Report Card — or National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — in math and reading for fourth and eighth grades between 2011 and 2015.



Thanks to the efforts of TNSTRONG and statewide anti-tobacco programs, youth use of cigarettes has declined from 21.6% in 2011 to 9.4% in 2017.

To eliminate youth tobacco use, the Department of Health formed **Tennessee Stop Tobacco and Revolutionize our New Generation** or **TN STRONG**, a state-wide, youth-led initiative to take down tobacco use. Thanks to the efforts of TNSTRONG and statewide anti-tobacco programs, youth use of cigarettes has declined from 21.6% in 2011 to 9.4% in 2017. There are also 130 youth tobacco prevention councils across the state.

The state has sought to increase access to **mental and emotional health services**. The System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT), in partnership with the Tennessee Commission on Children & Youth (TCCY), ensures access to community-based services for young people facing mental, emotional, and behavioral health needs.

SOCAT includes wraparound services to divert children and youth from higher levels of care, such as hospitalization or psychiatric residential treatment facilities, and keep them in the community.

The **Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness** strives to create a healthier Tennessee by bringing together a statewide coalition of employers, health insurers, hospital systems, local governments, school systems, healthcare-focused foundations, and community organizers to enable and encourage Tennesseans to lead healthier lives. The Foundation

strives to increase the number of Tennesseans who are physically active for at least 30 minutes five times a week, promote a healthy diet, and reduce the number of people who use tobacco. Their **Small Starts for Families program** provides tips and resources to help kids from birth to early childhood and their families make small, easy lifestyle changes to lead healthier lives.

Tennessee currently has approximately 7,500 children in foster care, through no fault of their own. **TNFosters** is important to ensure everyone is set up for success. The statewide initiative launched by the Governor and First Lady links government, faith, business, creative, non-profits, and volunteers to strengthen and sustain Tennessee's foster care system.

Through TNFosters, the Department of Children's Services works closely with partners to educate the public on community needs, recruit foster parents, and create wrap-around support systems to help care for children in state custody. The aim is to provide a forever home for these children, which is why encouraging adoption, particularly by foster parents, is central to this campaign. To date, more than 4,000 incredible foster parents have stepped up to provide a safe and supportive environment to these children.





Literacy focus

The ability to read improves outcomes, education, and prospects for all.

That is why literacy has been at the core of the Haslam Administration's initiatives for Tennessee children since day one. First Lady Crissy Haslam said, "It's our responsibility to build readers who are prepared for success from birth, in school, during college, and through the career path that lies beyond."

National studies reveal that reading ability in third grade is a strong predictor of student success. In response to relatively stagnant literacy rates, Governor Haslam, First Lady Haslam, and Department of Education launched the **Read to be Ready initiative** to improve children's reading skills.

The Department of Education invested \$30 million over three years with the goal that 75% of third graders be proficient readers by 2025. The state supported 100+ districts through a Read to be Ready coaching network.

The Departments of Education and Human Services also partnered to increase the summer literacy camps to 73% participation by school systems, including almost all economically distressed districts. Student surveys revealed the following:

Reading motivation
increased by an
average of 2.5%

Accuracy rate
in reading increased
from 80 to 85%

**Comprehension
rate** increased
from 65 to 67%
at the end of camp



Launched in 2014, First Lady Crissy Haslam's **Read20 Book Patrol** is an initiative partnering with law enforcement across the state to encourage early grade reading and build positive relationships with officers in Tennessee communities. As part of the project, police officers in participating communities hand out books to children during their service who might not have access to books in their homes. Law enforcement officers are great partners in the effort to encourage reading, because they understand that approximately two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade end up in jail or on welfare.

Attracting young readers to improve literacy has been a focus of the Tennessee State Library and Archives. Those organizations have had great success expanding offerings via nine libraries receiving grants to develop early childhood literacy services for children not currently reached by in-library services. Through community partnerships with Head Starts, housing authorities, day cares, schools, and health departments, programs providing story time, free books, literacy kits, STEM activities, and musical performances were provided to 4,058 children in 277 programs.

A **kids portal** was also built into R.E.A.D.S. (Regional E-Book and Audiobook Download System). This portal assisted families in e-book selection by Lexile levels. Titles downloaded in the first year were 39,454 – accounting

for 20% of the total 193,001 juvenile books downloaded that year. In the second year, 32% of the 230,227 books downloaded were from R.E.A.D.S.

Summer Reading programs held at public libraries have long been a way to combat the “summer slide” of learning loss. The number of Summer Reading program events has increased 44% from 2012 to 2017 and attendance has increased 29% over the same time.

Because literacy is so important, innovation to reach those who are impaired is critical. In an effort to reach the youngest visually-impaired children in our state, a call-in story time program was established in September 2016. Patrons call **Library for Accessible Books and Media (LABM)** to register and receive a mailed story time kit of tactile, interactive supplies. They then participate in a monthly conference call to hear a story and participate in craft making, guided by the LABM staff.

Since its inception, 128 patrons have called in to participate. This program was the first of its kind in the U.S. and has served as a model for other states wishing to replicate the program.



ACEs focus

The State of Tennessee is proactive in embracing new ideas and programs to help protect and prepare our children for a productive future.

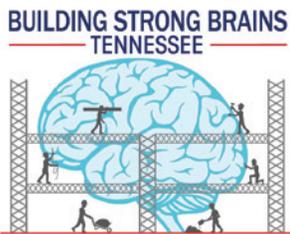


As the latest brain science shows, chronic trauma—what experts call “adverse childhood experiences,” or “ACEs”—can disrupt this brain-building process. Like constructing a house in a storm or with poor-quality materials and tools, ACEs are toxic to brain development and can compromise structural integrity. Left unaddressed, ACEs make it more difficult for a child to succeed in school, live a healthy life, and contribute to the state’s future prosperity.

At present, public policy and practice lag behind the brain science. That is why Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, First Lady Crissy Haslam, Deputy Gov. Jim Henry, and the **ACE Awareness Foundation** launched the Tennessee ACEs Initiative in November 2015.

Starting with a major statewide public/private initiative, **Building Strong Brains Tennessee** was born from research gathered in the CDC-Kaiser Permanente ACE Study—one of the largest studies of childhood abuse, neglect, and

family dysfunction and their effects on lifelong health and well-being.



SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Awareness Foundation

Based in Memphis and founded in 2015, the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) Awareness Foundation has played a leadership role in making Tennessee one of the most trauma-informed states in the nation. The foundation is dedicated to increasing public understanding of childhood trauma and the deep and long-lasting impact it can have across the life span, developing models as well as identifying and supporting innovative strategies that prevent toxic stress or lessen its effects on children and their families, and changing local and state systems to support ACE prevention efforts.

The foundation’s signature initiative for addressing ACEs is its **Universal Parenting Places (UPPs)**. These judgment-free zones are places where parents, grandparents, and other caregivers receive professional counseling with a licensed therapist, information, emotional support, and referrals for family-related issues and concerns, no matter how small, as well as participate in stress-reduction and child-bonding activities—all at no cost.

With a major goal of promoting children’s social emotional health, the UPP model, which employs a strengths-based approach, is based on the work of Robin Karr-Morse, a family therapist; founder of The Parenting Institute in Portland, Oregon; and author of *Scared Sick: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Adult Disease* and *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence*. The model also draws on the latest research in genetics, child development, and neurobiology, and works from a wellness-based, family-centered perspective. The foundation was also the catalyst for the State of Tennessee’s Building Strong Brains initiative.

For more information on the Foundation and how to partner with it, visit ACEAwareness.org.



Powered by the Memphis-based ACE Awareness Foundation, with significant support from the Haslam Administration, Building Strong Brains Tennessee has made considerable progress in its efforts to establish Tennessee as a national model for how a state can promote culture change in early childhood, based on a philosophy that preventing and mitigating adverse childhood experiences and their impact is the most promising approach to helping Tennessee children lead productive, healthy lives and, in turn, contribute to the state's success.

State agencies have played a vital role in advancing this work.

- The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) has provided training for trainers to equip individuals to speak about the role of life experiences in shaping brain development. Nine TCCY Regional Councils on Children and Youth provide important training, networking, and information-sharing opportunities.

- The Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, designed the curriculum *Building Strong Brains: Strategies for Educators* and provides training to empower school leaders and teachers to address chronic childhood trauma in schools and classrooms. The curriculum has been adopted broadly throughout Tennessee schools.
- Staff working in a range of agencies, including the TennCare Division, Departments of Children's Services, Human Services, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Services, have become ACEs trainers.
- The Division of Mental Health Services, Department of Human Services, and others have added contract language reflecting the commitment to preventing and mitigating the effects

"We now know that the foundations of learning, brain development, and social-emotional wellness are all set from a child's earliest experiences."

— FIRST LADY
CRISSY HASLAM

of adverse childhood experiences.

- The Department of Health through its clinics, care coordination and contracted home visiting services have trained staff to assist parents in early literacy and "language nutrition" through the Talk With Me Baby Initiative.

The state of Tennessee remains one of the most ACE-aware and trauma-informed states in the U.S. for its accomplishments over the last eight years.





Education to workforce

As education continues and adulthood looms, the state's focus shifts to opportunities to help an individual succeed.

All of our efforts from birth to youth help prepare Tennesseans for health, happiness, and success. We must acknowledge that all of our work with children eventually leads to the workforce.

Drive to 55 embraces this idea. Its initiatives include **Tennessee Promise** and **Tennessee Reconnect**, which provide educational opportunities to our Family Assistance Families. Family Assistance has conducted three annual outreach campaigns to SNAP and FF recipients encouraging them to commit to the Tennessee Promise Program.

As a result of this outreach, 9,973 students made a commitment to participate. A number of Family Assistance staff have also volunteered as mentors for the Tennessee Promise program. All Client Representatives and a selection of Child Care Evaluators will be trained to assist adults with Tennessee Reconnect.

Additionally, Tennessee Promise is both a scholarship and mentoring program focused on increasing the number of students who attend college in Tennessee. It provides students a last-dollar scholarship, meaning the scholarship will cover the cost of tuition and mandatory

fees not covered by the Pell grant, the HOPE scholarship, or the Tennessee Student Assistance Award. Students may use the scholarship at any of the state's 13 community colleges, 27 colleges of applied technology, or other eligible institutions offering an associate degree program.

While removing the financial burden is key, a critical component of Tennessee Promise is the individual guidance each participant receives from a mentor while navigating the college admission process.

Tennessee does not stop advocating for our young people during the critical transition from school to workforce.

Consider the pre-employment transition services to prepare students with disabilities ages 14-22 through counseling, work-based learning opportunities, post-secondary education, work readiness and independent living skills, and self-advocacy. Since 2014, the **Vocational Rehabilitation program** has contracted with more than 25 community rehabilitation providers to offer these services to students with disabilities. In 2018, the vocational rehabilitation program has provided

more than 8,000 pre-employment transition services to students across the state.

The **Transition School to Work program** offers vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to high school students with disabilities who are interested in employment after leaving high school. The goal is a smooth, seamless transition from high school to career development or workforce. In 2017-18, Transition School to Work grants increased from 19 to 38 serving 42 local education agencies, including Tennessee School for the Blind and Tennessee School for the Deaf. The grants provided preparation activities to more than 5,500 students in 2016-2017.

Collaborations with colleges and universities have encouraged support for youth participating in Extension of Foster Services and increasing their retention rate within post-secondary education.

Once Tennesseans find work, we want to keep them healthy. That's why more than 160 voluntary smoke-free work places have been designated.







Continuous improvement

Our focus is on making the best resources available for all Tennessee children.

There is always more to be done for the children of Tennessee. State initiatives, agencies, and organizations perpetually evaluate efforts and identify opportunities. These efforts include the Three Branches Institute; Governor's Children's Cabinet and Single Team/Single Plan; the Breakthrough Series Collaborative; exit of the Brian A. Settlement case; the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act; the Council on Children's Mental Health; and Children's Advocacy Days.

The **Three Branches Institute (3BI)**, established with support from Casey Family Programs, focuses Executive, Legislative, and Judicial leaders on a common agenda to advance the well-being of Tennessee children and realign the Juvenile Justice system.

The Institute serves as the advisory group for Building Strong Brains Tennessee. It also advocated to apply the principles of Safety Science to the child welfare system, the first attempt in the country to use this approach to address deaths in the child welfare system.

Pertaining to juvenile justice, the Institute supported the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Juvenile Justice and PEW Charitable Trusts Partnership.



Keeping young people out of crime is an important strategy for improving both their long-term outcomes and public safety.

This led to passage of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 and development of the Tennessee National Guard Youth Challenge program.

For these efforts, Tennessee was invited by the National Governor's Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and Casey Family Programs to participate in a national 3BI program. There, Tennessee served as a model for other states with its commitment to mutual accountability among the branches to achieve objectives.

As previously introduced, the **Governor's Children's Cabinet**, co-chaired by the Governor and First Lady, includes members of the Children's Cabinet are the commissioners of the departments of Health, Children's Services, Human Services, Education, Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, and the Director of TennCare.

Collaboration between the Children's Cabinet six child-focused state departments and community partners has promoted service delivery to our most vulnerable populations through consolidating meetings and plans.

The **Single Team/Single Plan Approach** coordinates family services and treatment options and reduces safety concerns and risk while promoting best practices. The approach streamlines access points when attempting to acquire state services.

An ongoing **Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)** on safety culture, trauma-informed care, and workforce/team resilience involves case work staff and supervisors from multiple regions and program areas.

The **Children's Rights advocacy group** filed the case known as the Brian A. Suit in 2000 in alliance with a young Memphis foster child and his experience in the foster system in Tennessee. At the time, the suit highlighted the lack of proper education and legal protection for foster children in the state. The Brian A. Settlement was successfully exited in July 2017 after 17 years of court proceedings. Over the last eight years, the Department of Children's Services demonstrated a resolve to promote positive outcomes for the families served by the agency using innovative strategies and initiatives. As a result DCS has drastically overhauled their child welfare system, including arranging quicker and more stable homes for foster children, with over 92% of foster children having had two or less placements in the previous year, and consistently placing children within 75 miles of their previous homes. These institutional reforms have in turn created a safer and more prosperous environment for foster children.

Tennessee's juvenile justice system has seen significant improvements since 2011. Keeping young



TCCY JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Building on substantial reductions in incarceration of youth with the closure of Taft Youth Development Center in 2012

Reviewing circumstances and developing recommendations for a more therapeutic and evidence-informed approach in the remaining youth development centers. Including downsizing at Mountain View Youth Development Center

Participating in the Juvenile Justice Realignment Task Force in 2016 and Blue Ribbon Task Force on Juvenile Justice in 2017. This resulted in the Juvenile Justice Reform Act in 2018, an important step toward a more effective juvenile justice system with evidence-based services.

people out of crime is an important strategy for improving both their long-term outcomes and public safety.

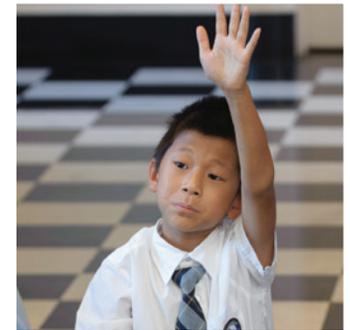
As the agency responsible for administering the **Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)** in Tennessee, TCCY has been involved in a variety of efforts for juvenile justice system improvement.

The Council on Children's Mental Health leads efforts to implement services that are child and family focused, culturally competent, and delivered in the most appropriate settings. In conjunction with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and TCCY, the Council has expanded systems of care over the years, including **System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT)**.

Tennessee Young Child Wellness Council provided an opportunity for all those working with young children to

obtain an Infant Mental Health Endorsement. Since November 2017 over 250 persons have initiated the process.

For 30 years, TCCY has convened children's advocates for an annual **Children's Advocacy Days (CAD)** in March. During this administration, the First Lady has been a speaker at every event except one. Commissioners of child-serving agencies have also spoken, with members of the Governor's Children's Cabinet participating on a panel. Since 2016, the Governor's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood have been presented at Children's Advocacy Days every other year. CAD has cultivated a large, diverse and state-wide audience.



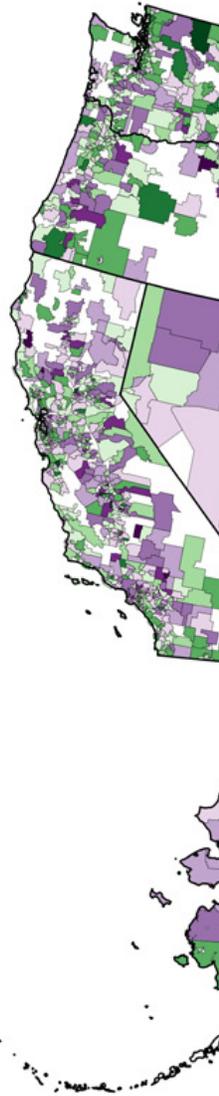
Making good on our promise

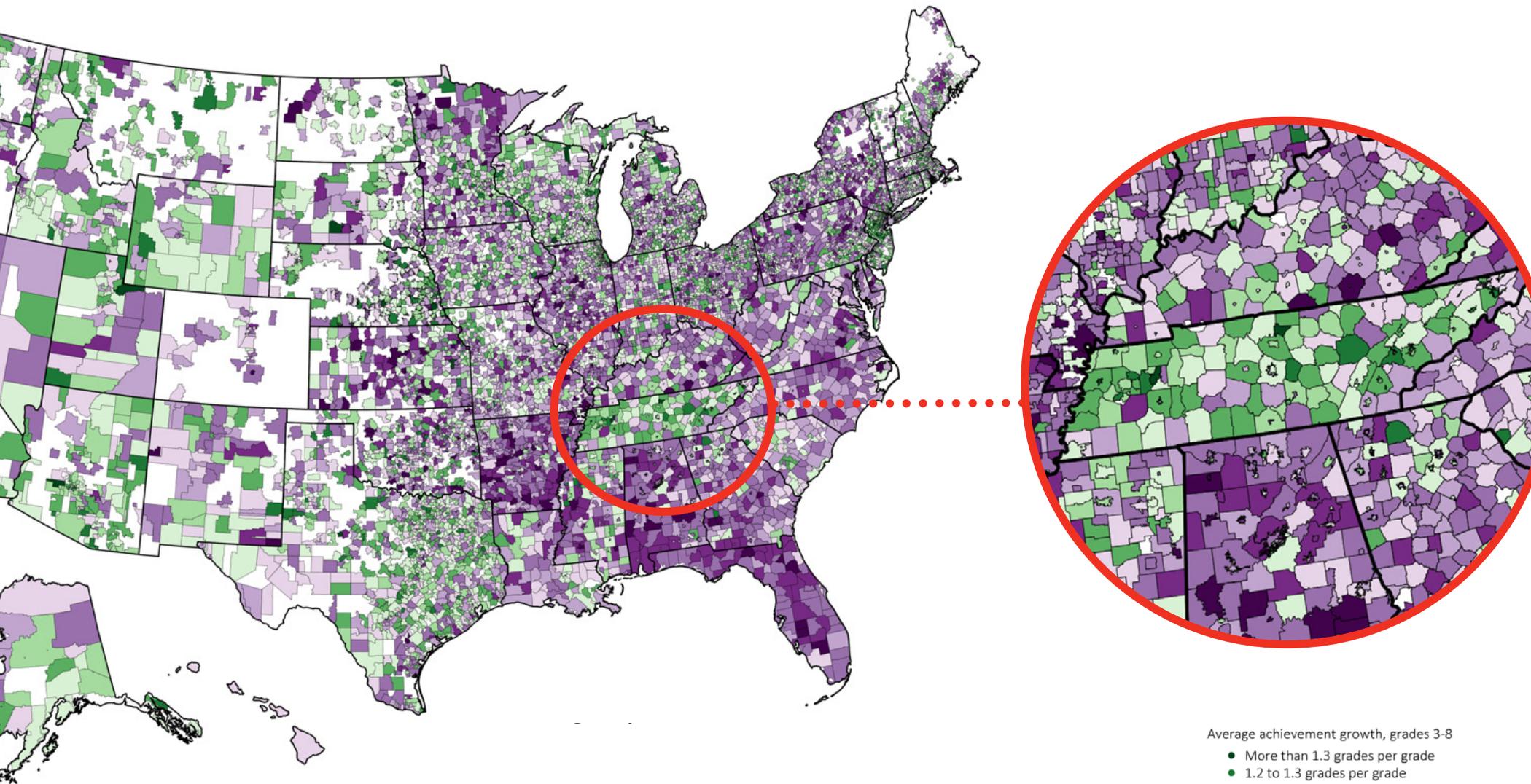
Tennessee's strength depends on the success of our children. Prioritizing their needs improves outcomes for all.

DELIVERING RESULTS

State agencies continually analyze data and results to improve efforts. The State's top achievements over the course of the Haslam Administration include the following:

- Named the **fastest improving state** on Nation's Report Card, or National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in both math and reading for fourth grade and eighth grade between 2011 and 2015
- Students **doubled the national average student growth** in both grades and scored above the national average for the first time ever in any subject—launching Tennessee into the top half of all states in fourth and eighth grade science.
- Launched Tennessee Promise in 2014**, resulting in a record increase of 5% of students entering postsecondary
- Increased FAFSA filing to 73.5% for seniors in 2017-18**, an increase from 69.5% in 2015-16, and the highest rate in the country
- Improved outcomes of recent graduates** to support the successful transition to college and career
- Noted 42.2% of students scoring 21+ on the ACT**; average state-wide score increased to 20.1
- Found that **47% of graduates concentrated in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) career cluster**; 40 available industry certifications
- Reported that **40% of students attempted an Early Postsecondary Opportunity (EPSOs)**; 34% earned postsecondary credit
- Supported **62% of graduates who needed remediation in 2016 during first year in postsecondary**, a reduction from 77% in 2011





Average achievement growth, grades 3-8

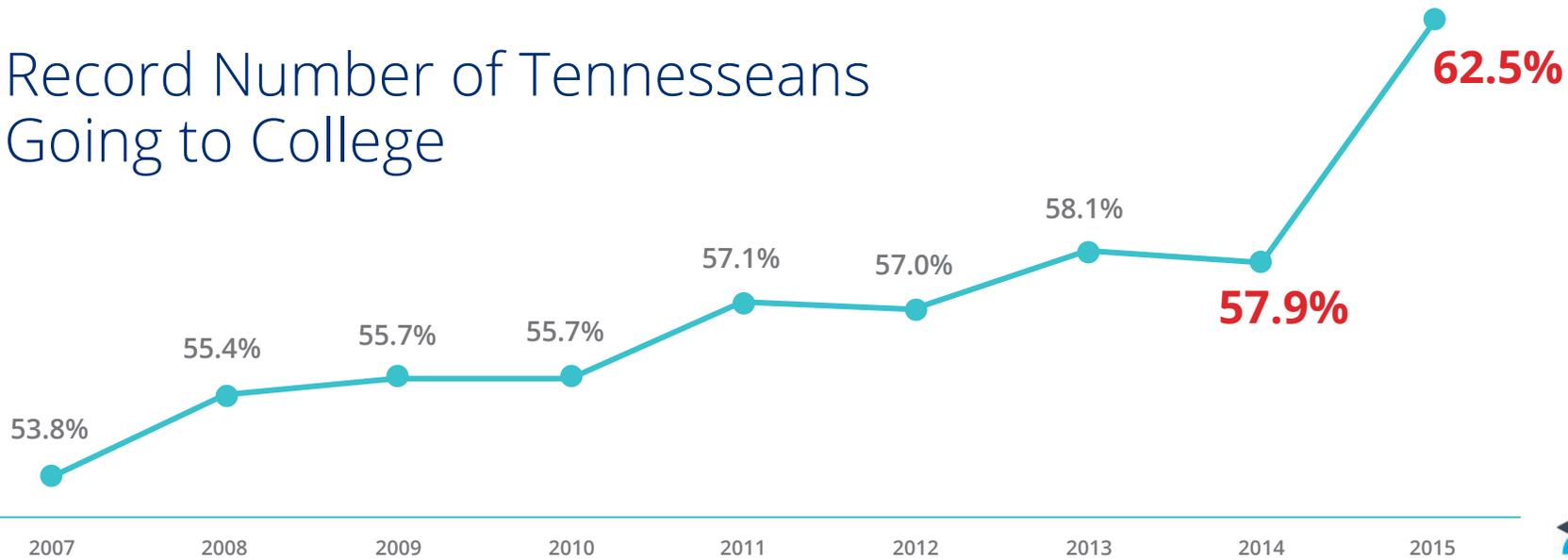
- More than 1.3 grades per grade
- 1.2 to 1.3 grades per grade
- 1.1 to 1.2 grades per grade
- 1.05 to 1.1 grades per grade
- 1 to 1.05 grades per grade
- 0.95 to 1 grades per grade
- 0.9 to 0.95 grades per grade
- 0.8 to 0.9 grades per grade
- 0.7 to 0.8 grades per grade
- Less than 0.7 grades per grade
- missing

Tennessee's Education Transformation

In December 2017, Stanford University's Center for Education Policy Analysis released a data map demonstrating average test score growth rates in districts across the country. On the map, Tennessee stands out for its progress in education growth.

Source: Stanford University, Center for Education Policy Analysis, 2017

Record Number of Tennesseans Going to College



The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Data Book ranks all the states on child well-being. In 2017, Tennessee had its best ranking at 35th, compared with 39th in 2011. This is a testament to improvements in reading, math, and high school graduation, and older youth in school or working, thanks to Tennessee Promise.

TCCY works with the Foundation in the release of the Data Book, and Governor Haslam participated in the 2017 release when the state achieved its best rank. TCCY also provides county-by-county data on the KIDS COUNT Data Center and has developed annual county rankings. KIDS COUNT provides critical data for use in planning, funding requests, and grant proposals.

Tennessee committed to ensure that youth who age out of state custody at 18 have at least one of the following at the time of emancipation: earned a GED/HiSet, graduated from high school, or enrolled in high school or post-secondary program.

DCS compiled the Transitional Survey of Emancipated Youth between January 1 and June 30, 2017 to measure this commitment. The survey found that out of 289 youth, 89% met one or more of the outlined criteria.



“Let us not forget what got us here. And let us not lose sight of the Tennessee we can be. Help us stay focused on each challenge before us, and continue the hard and necessary work to reach our full potential as a state focused on creating a better future for our youngest.”

—FIRST LADY CRISSY HASLAM
Children’s Advocacy Days, March 2018

The path ahead.

As this report illustrates, the collective efforts over the last eight years have set the stage for a new era of successful outcomes for Tennessee’s children and our state. Under the leadership of Governor and First Lady Haslam, state agencies found creative ways to work together and with organizations who share our mission to improve the lives of children from birth to adulthood.

Tennessee’s commitment to children will remain unwavering. Much has been done, but much work remains to continue our upward trajectory in serving children. At the same time, we have an opportunity to make Tennessee a national leader in diverse efforts that deliver results, like being the most trauma-informed state in the nation with greater attention to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The path ahead is clear and individuals in communities across the state are ready to keep working to build a brighter future for every child in Tennessee. We thank the countless State of Tennessee employees and citizens of this great state for their continued efforts.



Office of the
First Lady

Tennessee Tower / 312 Rosa L. Parks Ave. / Nashville, TN, 37243

TN.GOV/FIRSTLADY.HTML

Thank you to the ACE Awareness Foundation for funding this report.