Tennessee Struggles to Meet Child Mental Health Needs Post-Pandemic

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) released its annual KIDS COUNT State of the Child data report on January 13, examining key areas of health and well-being. This year’s report is uniquely positioned to examine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the state and federal supports that can be used to improve, among other issues, child health.

Children’s mental health has been especially impacted by the pandemic. The data report found the pandemic exacerbated several mental health concerns. Emergency Department visits for mental health issues increased 24 percent for youth ages 5-11 and 31 percent for youth ages 12-17. In 2021 and 2022, there were spikes in the number of visits for depression, eating disorders, OCD, anxiety, trauma, stressor-related disorders, and tic disorders. For girls, the number of visits for eating disorders doubled during the pandemic.

These challenges have increased demand for mental health services, posing a concern for Tennessee which, relative to other states, is under-prepared to provide mental health treatment. While nationally there is one provider for every 350 individuals, in Tennessee there is only one provider for every 590, ranking our state 46th in Mental
Health Workforce Availability. For more information on the challenges facing Tennessee and effective intervention strategies, read the full report here.

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**Partner with Insure Our Kids!**

Insure Our Kids is a coalition bringing the medical community and nonprofit organizations into a space where policy and healthcare issues are discussed. We need your voice. Please join us! [Take our partner survey here.](#)

Follow Insure Our Kids on [Facebook!](#)

Contact Shana Watkins at [swatkins@tnjustice.org](mailto:swatkins@tnjustice.org) if you have any questions.

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**IN CASE YOU MISSED IT**

**Help Prevent At-Risk Children in West Tennessee from Losing Care!**

An ongoing contract dispute between BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS) and Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare is preventing children from accessing critical services in West Tennessee. Because of the stalemate, BCBS is refusing to pay for treatment delivered at Le Bonheur, with few exceptions. Children with complex medical needs that can only be met at LeBonheur Children’s Hospital are caught in the middle. Ultimately, it is the governor’s responsibility to ensure that Tennessee children have access to the care they need. [Sign the petition to join TJC and the Jackson NAACP as we urge Gov. Bill Lee to step in to resolve this contract dispute to ensure children receive the care they need.](#)

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**TJC in the News**

- [Record 16.3 million seek health coverage through ‘Obamacare’](#)
- NAACP hosts meeting regarding children’s health
- TennCare renewal process to begin in April
- Knoxville mother fighting to get disabled daughter needed care
- [What eligible TennCare members need to do to stay covered in 2023](#)

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**FEDERAL UPDATES**

Biden Administration Sees Increase in Marketplace Enrollments
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reports 16.3 million Americans signed up for health coverage through the Marketplace since the start of Open Enrollment. (Select states have an extended deadline, so some individuals will continue to enroll through January 31.) The Biden Administration reports this is a near-50 percent increase from enrollment figures during the Trump Administration. In Tennessee, Open Enrollment is now closed; however, individuals who are disenrolled from TennCare because they are no longer eligible will qualify for a Special Enrollment Period and may apply amid upcoming redeterminations. Click here to read CMS's complete "National Snapshot."

As of January 1, 2023, TennCare covers all medically necessary x-rays, cleanings, fillings, crowns, and other dental services at no charge. These services were previously only available to children on TennCare. Click here to find a provider. If you can’t, contact us!

TennCare Expands Dental Coverage for Adults

Update TennCare if Your Address Has Changed!
Redeterminations will begin in the spring and continue for the next year. During the last redetermination period, 128,000 children lost coverage despite the overwhelming majority remaining eligible. To avoid disenrollment for eligible children, it is important that TennCare has enrollees’ current address information. If your address has changed, call TennCare at 1-855-259-0701 or make a change to your account online through the TennCare Connect portal.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Help Tennesseans Keep Their Health Coverage!

Tennessee will soon start a year-long process to decide which people can keep their health coverage under the TennCare or CoverKids programs. Over a million Tennesseans face a threat to their health care. Without help, hundreds of thousands – most of whom are children or adults with disabilities – will lose access to care. Individuals, organizations and businesses are needed to help fellow Tennesseans get through this process.

Partner Call to Action

Organizations like schools, health care providers and community groups whose clientele include many TennCare members, need to develop plans for helping them understand the process and what they must do to keep their coverage. We are hosting a Call to Action to level set and connect with partners across the state.

Please join us on March 1, 2023. Click here to register.

Call for Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help individuals who cannot complete the process on their own. In the best traditions of the Volunteer State, all are invited to collaborate in a coordinated effort to help our neighbors. Please feel free to join us in our Partner Call to Action (linked above). If you are interested in providing direct volunteer work with our organization, please sign up here.

Ways to Keep Your Health Coverage!

If you are on TennCare, you may get a packet from TennCare saying they need updated information. This packet will probably be sent to you this year by mail. If you don't respond you might lose your TennCare or CoverKids health
insurance.

What should you do right now?
Make sure TennCare has your correct address. You can do this online through your TennCare Connect portal (https://tenncareconnect.tn.gov/) or by calling TennCare Connect at 855-259-0701.

What should you do when you get the packet?
Fill it out and send it to TennCare as soon as you get it. Directions on where to send it will be in the packet. It is a good idea to keep proof that you sent it. For example, if you fax it, keep the fax receipt. If you need help filling out the packet, you can call us at (615) 255-0331

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Reflecting on Oprah's "Color of Care":
A Fisk Wesley Center Panel Event

Sunday, January 29th
5 PM - 8 PM CST

REGISTER

Reflecting on Oprah's "Color of Care":
Christian Lifeway Ministries Panel Event

Saturday, February 23rd