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Children's Champion

• April 21, 2021 •
Tennessee Justice Center

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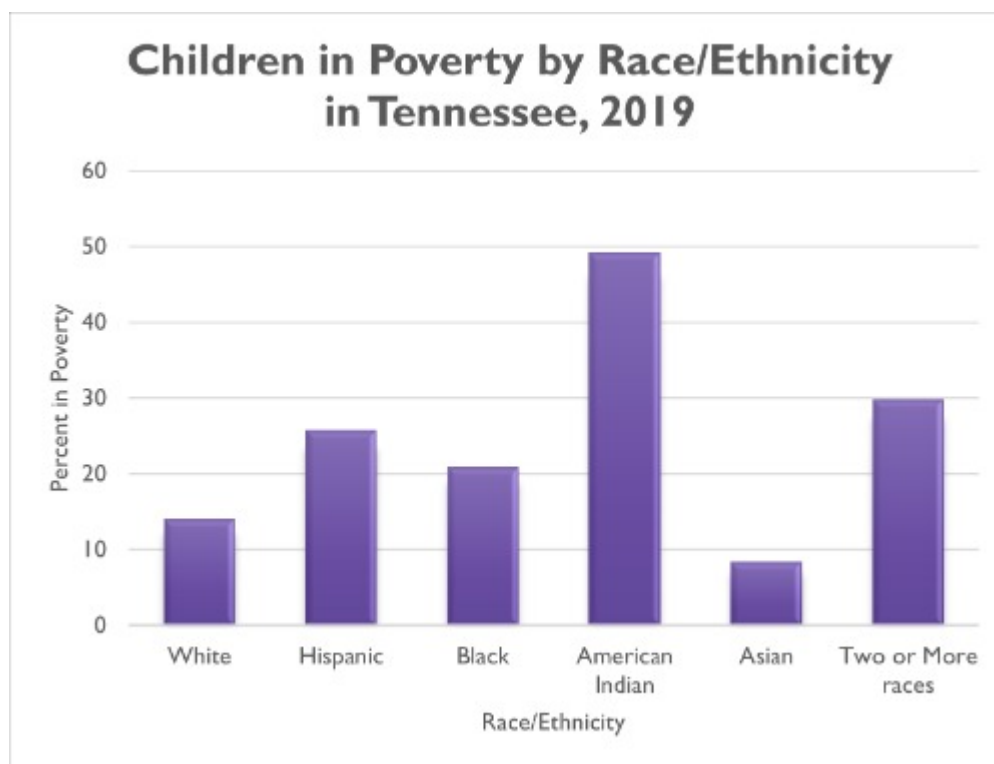
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MORE YOU KNOW

Findings from the State of America's Children® 2021 Report

The Children's Defense Fund recently released the [State of America's Children® 2021 Report](#). It details how children are faring in 12 key areas including child health, hunger and nutrition, and poverty and denote areas of improvement to inform policy decisions related to child welfare as we move forward.

Child health is particularly fragile, especially during the pandemic. The report denotes that while children of color are less than 50 percent of the child population, they made up almost 80 percent of the child COVID-19 related deaths between February and June 2020. This highlights a recurring theme throughout the report that children of color are faring worse than their white counterparts. They are not immune to COVID-19, and they are not immune to negative environmental impacts.



Disparities continue as we look at child poverty rates. While nationwide the child poverty rate was 14.4 percent in 2019, it was [20 percent for Tennessee](#). Both nationwide and in Tennessee, the poverty rate was disproportionately higher for children of color. In fact, 54 percent of children in poverty are children of color in Tennessee, yet they are only 35 percent of the state's child population. This report highlights many concerning racial disparities in child well-being and reinforces the need for more advocacy and policy solutions to bridge these gaps. [Check out TJC's Health Equity page to learn about how we are advocating for equitable outcomes](#). Also, you can share your story [here](#) if you have experienced racial health disparities.

ICYMI

- **Katie Beckett Part A Tier II Enrollment Opens**- As of April 6th, TennCare has [opened 50 slots](#) in the Katie Beckett program for children who have been approved for part A tier II. The other 50 slots available for Part A are still reserved for children meeting part A tier 1 level of care.

- **New P-EBT Story Map-** Over 200 affected families have reached out to us over the past two months to share their stories as they try to feed their children during an economic and health crisis. We created a map to elevate those stories and show the need for immediate food assistance in Tennessee. [View the map.](#)
- **In the News**
 - [Tennessee Families Still Waiting for Promised P-EBT Lunch Money](#)
 - [7 Reasons Why Tennessee Must Immediately Expand Medicaid | Opinion](#)
 - [We Didn't Create the Black Maternal Health Crisis, But We Are Stepping Up To Solve It](#)
- **TJC's 2020 Annual Report-** The report recounts what TJC has been up to the past year including the challenges of working from home and our many victories in helping families access proper healthcare and nutrition. [Check out the report.](#)
- **Covid-19 Vaccine** - Everyone 16 and older in all 95 Tennessee counties is eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine as of April 5th. [Learn more on our COVID-19 page.](#)
- **Federal Marketplace Special Enrollment Period Extended** - Open enrollment for the ACA Marketplace is now open until August 15. Many have lost their health insurance due to the pandemic. This is an opportunity to enroll through [HealthCare.gov.](#)

LOOKING FORWARD

Federal and State updates

TennCare III Public Comment Period Open

On March 31, 2021, the public comment period for [TennCare III amendment 1](#) opened. The state proposes to have people currently on Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) waivers be managed by managed care organizations (MCOs). Additionally, children eligible for SSI who were enrolled in TennCare Select would have their care administered by MCOs.

These changes pose real problems for individuals with the most significant needs, challenges, and disabilities. This will change the kinds and amount of supports and services provided to waiver participants including medication restrictions.

If this waiver is approved, you will not have the opportunity to voice your concerns to CMS for 10 years. Let the State know they need to maintain at least the current level of services indefinitely without reduction and that these programs need to be funded at a level that ensures providers are equitably compensated so that they can deliver quality and consistent care.

The deadline to submit a comment is **May 15th, 2021.**

[Submit a comment to CMS and share your thoughts and concerns about these changes with TennCare and DIDD](#)

Medicaid Expansion: #ExpandMedicaidTN

The American Rescue Plan has reopened the conversation about Medicaid expansion in Tennessee by offering new monetary incentives to states who expand coverage now. New hope arose when Tennessee's Lt. Gov. McNally [announced](#) that he is reconsidering Medicaid expansion now that Biden has sweetened the deal. We need other state leaders to follow his lead and reconsider their support for Medicaid expansion!



Here's what expansion would mean for Tennessee:

- An opportunity to reduce racial disparities in both health outcomes and health coverage
- More money for rural hospitals and our state's overall healthcare infrastructure
- Health insurance for more than 300,000 Tennesseans
- An estimated \$900M in additional state revenue to help overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

[Call Gov. Lee and your TN State Senator urge them to take advantage of this opportunity to give affordable health insurance to more Tennesseans](#)

TennCare Postpartum Coverage Expansion

Our country and state are experiencing a maternal mortality crisis that is disproportionately killing Black and Native American mothers. The 2020 Tennessee Maternal Mortality Annual Report reported 82 deaths in 2018 and determined that 77% of those deaths were preventable. Governor Lee promised back in 2019 to pursue a pilot program that extends postpartum coverage from 60 days to a year, but the program was eventually cut from his budget last year. As of now, Tennessee is one of only three states that has not opted to extend postpartum coverage, but there is hope that this year will be the year it finally happens! We are grateful that the governor has once again included funding for postpartum coverage extension in his budget, and we want to make sure the legislature approves the budget.

[Email Gov. Lee and thank him for keeping the Medicaid postpartum coverage extension in the budget and ask your legislators to approve it in the final budget.](#)

P-EBT

Have questions about Round 3 P-EBT? Visit our P-EBT page today to watch our webinar sharing details about Round 3 P-EBT.

[Watch the Webinar in English](#)

¿Tiene preguntas sobre la Ronda 3 P-EBT? Visite nuestra página P-EBT para ver nuestro seminario web para obtener mas informacion sobre la Ronda 3 P-EBT.

[Ver el Seminario Web en Español](#)

TJC will send updates on any breaking news regarding P-EBT as we learn about them. [Sign-up for our P-EBT Alerts.](#)

JOIN US



Understanding Child Nutrition Programs

Thursday, April 29th

11:00 am CT / 12:00 pm ET

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Child nutrition programs help provide stable meals for millions of hungry children every year. Join us on Thursday, April 29 at 11am CT for an overview of the programs and learn how they positively influence the educational and health outcomes of food insecure children. We'll give a basic overview of each program, discuss why they are important, the intersection between the programs, and how we can advocate for

improvements. This will be a 4-part series. Following this webinar, we will go in depth into each of the child nutrition programs.



War on Poverty: Is the American Rescue Plan Act a Game-Changer for Tennessee?

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

11:00 am- 12:30 pm

[**REGISTER NOW**](#)

In this 90-minute FREE webinar, you will learn about:

- The impact on Tennessee's safety net programs like TennCare, CoverKids, SNAP, P-EBT, and WIC
- New unemployment benefits, child tax credits, and housing relief
- Changes related to purchasing health insurance on the ACA marketplace
- Financial incentives granted to Tennessee to increase home and community-based services (HCBS), postpartum coverage, and expanding Medicaid coverage. These benefits are optional, and Governor Lee must claim them!
- How to follow the latest legislative developments including ways to advocate and hold our legislators accountable



Addressing the Childhood Mental Health Crisis: Part 1

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

12:00 pm CT / 1:00 pm ET

[**REGISTER NOW**](#)

Join the Tennessee Justice Center and Tennessee Voices for Children for part one of a two-part series in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. In this webinar, we will discuss the factors that are leading to a rise in depression and suicide rates among children and what actions must be taken to address this major issue. Attendees will also receive information about the resources that exist to combat and prevent childhood depression and suicide. This webinar is free but pre-registration is required.



Medicaid Master Class: All About Kids

A Virtual Interactive Event

Thursday, May 20, 2021

9:00 am – 4:00 pm CST

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Join us for an all-day virtual conference that provides advocates, lawyers, and navigators the knowledge and tools they need to ensure Tennessee's kids have quality healthcare coverage. This event sheds light on how to navigate difficult systems and offer support to the most vulnerable and treasured members of our communities. You will walk away with insights and perspectives about the root causes of child poverty, what qualifies children for the TennCare and CoverKids programs, how to navigate the appeals process, and what policies and programs our state needs to build a better future for all our children.

As a reminder, the Tennessee Justice Center also helps with:

1. Enrollment onto TennCare and CoverKids
2. Service Issues
3. Redetermination Issues

If you ever encounter anyone who is having trouble getting health insurance or getting health services, please call TJC: (615) 255-0331.

If there is any information you would like us to share on your behalf, including events and resources, please reply to this email.

Sincerely,



Kinika Young
Senior Director of Health Policy and Advocacy
Tennessee Justice Center

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