AAP-AACAP-CHA Declares National State of Emergency for Child Mental Health

On October 19, 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children’s Hospital Association (CHA) declared a national state of emergency in child and adolescent mental health. The Covid-19 pandemic and continuous racial injustice nationwide have intensified stress levels among youth. There has been an increase in youth ER visits for mental health emergencies. AAP, AACAP, and CHA call for policymakers and advocates to advance mental health policies to improve funding and access to evidence-based and trauma-informed mental health screenings, diagnosis and treatments in the home, primary care, community, and school settings.

Tennessee ranks 34th in overall mental health (down from 28th in 2021) according to the 2022 State of Mental Health in America report. It ranks 40th in youth (ages 12-17) mental health. Tennessee’s ranking is due to high prevalence of mental illness yet low access to adequate mental healthcare. In the past year, thousands of youth in Tennessee suffered from mental health issues.

- 70,000 (13.7%) suffered from at least one major depressive episode (MDE)
- 40,000 (66.5%) with a MDE did not receive any mental health care
- 51,000 (10.3%) experienced a severe MDE
- 6,000 (12.2%) with severe MDE received consistent treatment
- 21,000 (4%) reported a substance use disorder
- 19,000 (8.8%) had private insurance which did not cover mental and emotional problems

Governor Lee has begun to address the child mental health crisis in TN by expanding school based behavioral health programs and creating the behavioral health safety net for uninsured children in TN, but more must be done. Check out our Children’s Mental Health Vlog to explore changes and policy recommendations for Tennessee to improve child mental health.
IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

November is Black Babies Awareness Month

It’s Black Babies Awareness Month! Black babies and families must be supported and empowered. Read the National Black Child Agenda to learn about inclusive policies that will improve their life outcomes at https://unc.live/3E14UUK. If you haven't already, be sure to sign our #BlackHealthMatters pledge!

CTC Usage in Tennessee

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) expanded the Child Tax Credit (CTC). It allowed families to get half of the CTC in monthly advance payments (up to $300 per child a month) from July 2021 to December 2021. A study by the Social Policy Institute at Washington University in St. Louis found approximately two-thirds of eligible TN families received the first two advance CTC payments. Majority of families used the payments to pay off debts and purchase food. To claim the second half of the CTC (or the full CTC), families must file their 2021 taxes in 2022. Learn more here.

Recent News

- TennCare expects 300,000 to lose coverage after pandemic ends
- Solving the Black maternal health crisis in Tennessee in 3 easy steps | Opinion
- Metro Nashville Health gains grant to train doulas
- TennCare proposes $600M budget increase
- Tennessee faith leaders call for expanded Medicaid as COVID-19 special session begins

CYSHCN Healthcare Coverage and Access

The Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) released a new report entitled Children with Special Health Care Needs: Coverage, Affordability, and HCBS Access. It outlines the scope of health insurance and barriers faced by families with children and youth with special healthcare needs (CYSHCN). 97% of CYSHCN have health
Children with Medicaid/CHIP as their insurance often had greater healthcare needs than those with only private insurance. They were more likely to be non-white and tended to have lower incomes. Also, they were more likely to report their benefits adequately met their needs due to Medicaid’s Early and Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) guidelines for those under 21. Read the full report.

![Race/Ethnicity of Children with Special Health Care Needs by Coverage Status, 2019](image)

**Federal Marketplace Open Now**

Open enrollment for the ACA Marketplace started November 1st and ends on January 15, 2022. Families with income up to 150% FPL are eligible for $0 premium silver benchmark health plans. If families apply by December 15th, their plan can start as early as January 1st. Families can apply or change their coverage on healthcare.gov.

**Children Ages 5-11 Eligible for Covid-19 Vaccine**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11 years.

Learn more [here](#) and be sure to check out or upcoming [Vaccines for Kids: Fact or Fiction Webinar](#) with Dr. Dorothy Sinard and Dr. Barbara Dentz on December 2nd.

**FEDERAL UPDATES**

**Build Back Better Act**

This month Congress continues to discuss and will soon vote on the [Build Back Better Act](#), a human infrastructure plan which emerged in the House of Representatives. Build Back Better is said to be the "most transformative investment in children and caregiving in generations." Build Back Better [advances health equity](#) and makes some permanent improvements to safety net programs like Medicaid/CHIP.

Child and Family Health Provisions include:
• 12-month continuous coverage for children on Medicaid and CHIP
• 12-month postpartum coverage for pregnant people on Medicaid and CHIP
• Permanent CHIP funding
• Temporary Coverage Gap fix (extended ACA premium tax credits to those under 138% FPL in the 12 non-expansion states)
• Extension of ARPA ACA premium tax credit reductions (4 out of 5 people are eligible for a plan with $10 or less monthly premium)
• Improvements to HCBS funding and access to services
• Most Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act provisions (research and funding to address maternal health equity and social determinants of maternal health in addition to growing and diversifying the perinatal workforce)

Other Child and Family Provisions include:

• Universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds
• Affordable childcare (ensures most families pay no more than 7% of their income for high-quality childcare)
• Extension of ARPA expanded Child Tax Credit
• Investments in affordable housing (rental assistance, down payment assistance)
• Expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision to more schools (offers free meals to all students at a school)

As Congress keeps debating the reconciliation package in the coming weeks, they must keep these provisions intact and unchanged once it reaches the Senate. Email Marsha Blackburn and other members of Congress and tell them to support families and pass Build Back Better.

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**TN UPDATES**

**HCBS: Shrinking ECF CHOICES Waiting List**

The Employment and Community First CHOICES (ECF CHOICES) program provides TennCare coverage and home and community-based services (HCBS) like transportation and employment exploration to individuals of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program has about 2,500 enrollees. An additional 5,000 people are on the waiting list. Currently, only individuals in crisis are eligible to enroll in the program. TennCare and DIDD have recently announced a plan to reduce the waiting list and temporarily open 2,000 more slots. They will use the $400 million federal funds provided through ARPA to improve HCBS in Tennessee. $91 million will go towards reducing the waiting list. This is a step in the right direction toward ensuring qualifying families can access ECF CHOICES expansive benefits.

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**WIC Participation Lags, Benefits Increased**

A report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) found that many eligible low-income children and pregnant women are missing out on Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits which include foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services. WIC is available for low-income pregnant or postpartum people and children under age 5. The report notes SNAP and Medicaid usage have increased substantially during the pandemic, yet WIC has not. In
Tennessee from 2020 to 2021, there was a 0% change in total WIC participation compared to 10% and 7% increases in Medicaid and SNAP participation respectively. [View full report]

Additionally, Congress extended the fresh fruits and vegetable benefits and if you are pregnant or breastfeeding you could receive as much as $43 or $47 respectively to buy more fruits and vegetables. And children are eligible for $24 in benefits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Temporary CVB Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnant and Postpartum</td>
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<td>Breastfeeding</td>
<td>$47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exclusively Breastfeeding with multiples</td>
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</table>

If you participate in WIC or know a family that does, check your balance to make sure you’re receiving the higher benefit amount for your family before you go shopping. If you haven’t received the higher amount you are eligible for, call your local WIC department now. [Find your WIC office here](#) if they can’t help call 1-800-DIAL-WIC for assistance.

**JOIN US**

**Throwing a Fit for Health Justice: A Statewide Virtual Rally**
Saturday, November 20
10 am - 11 am CST
Free Webinar

**Vaccine for Kids: Facts vs. Fiction**
Thursday, December 2nd
11 am - 12 pm CST
Free Webinar
Connecting Seniors to Food Assistance Programs

Tuesday, December 7th
2 pm - 3 pm CST
Free Webinar

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Tennessee Justice Center
211 7th Ave N
Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37219
United States

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