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Tennessee Department of Human Services

2020 Annual Report





Tennessee Department of Human Services Annual Report 2020

This year, by comparison has been the most transformative and illustrated the strength and resilience of State Government and Tennesseans."

- Commissioner Danielle W. Barnes

Table of Contents

Introduction

- 06 Message from Commissioner Barnes
- 08 Mission, Vision, Values

Who We Are

- 09 TDHS at a Glance
- 00 Serving Tennesseans In Any Situation
- 10 TDHS By the Numbers (Revenue, Expenditures, People Served)

Meeting Our Customers Where They Are

- 30 Introduction
- 30 Child Care and Community Services
- 40 Food Programs
- 42 Family Assistance and Child Support
- 46 Rehabilitation Services
- 52 2Gen Partnerships and Progress
- 56 Workforce and Education

Behind the Scenes

- 58 Maintaining Momentum (Operations)
- 59 The Power of the Law (General Counsel)
- 59 Integral Strength (Inspector General)
- 60 The Power of Human Capital (Human Resources, Talent Management – Learning & Development)
- 62 The Power of Information (PILO)



A Message From Commissioner Danielle W. Barnes

Welcome to the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) State Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report. This report serves to highlight important areas of impact, metrics and accomplishments made by TDHS over the past year.

Throughout my nearly 17-years in State Government, I've witnessed tremendous progress in the way it operates. The State has become more efficient, customer-focused, and innovative. In serving as the Commissioner of TDHS, this year, by comparison has been the most transformative and illustrated the strength and resilience of State Government and Tennesseans.

At the start of the state fiscal year in July 2019, the Department continued efforts to refine our strategic plan, furthering action toward modernizing legacy systems, engaging employees and customers in business process improvements, tailoring our programs to better serve stakeholders and much more.

In the fall, the Department began to work closely with Tennessee state legislators and stakeholders to develop a plan to utilize surplus Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. This generated more awareness of this important state benefit, opportunities to partner with more organizations on a local level with tailored services, and significant partnerships with state entities to reach more Tennesseans.

On March 3, 2020 a devastating tornado struck Middle Tennessee, destroying homes, businesses, and the TDHS Davidson County office, which had served hundreds of customers daily for the past 35 years. The destruction caused by the severe storms



was a significant blow to the TDHS team, given the Davidson County office had been a mainstay in the community, in addition to TDHS team members whose homes were seriously damaged, destroyed or without power for days on end. Despite this, the TDHS team banded together to innovate and continued to advance their work to ensure neighbors and those in need could still come to TDHS as a trusted resource.

Only days later, the State was struck by its first case of the COVID-19 pandemic, which set forth a new set of challenges – challenges that the TDHS team adapted to with much focus, hard work, sacrifice and dedication. TDHS has accomplished so much during the pandemic, that we've devoted a special section of the annual report to these efforts.



TN Photo Services
Tennessee State Capitol

During these periods of crisis and transition, the Tennessee Department of Human Services has doubled down on our organizational mission and vision as a guiding force. Now more than ever we're working to build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services. We've had to fast-forward work towards our vision to revolutionize the customer experience through innovation and a seamless network of services. The past year has made the TDHS team even more steadfast in serving Tennesseans.

I'm especially proud to serve alongside TDHS employees. I'm proud of all they've accomplished while maneuvering through their daily lives, and the programmatic changes necessary to carry out much needed programs and services. While this journey has not been easy, I'm continually inspired by the dedication and service they've exemplified.

**In service to all Tennesseans,
Danielle Whitworth Barnes, Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Human Services**



Mission Vision Values

DHS Mission

To build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services.

DHS Vision

To revolutionize the customer experience through innovation and a seamless network of services.

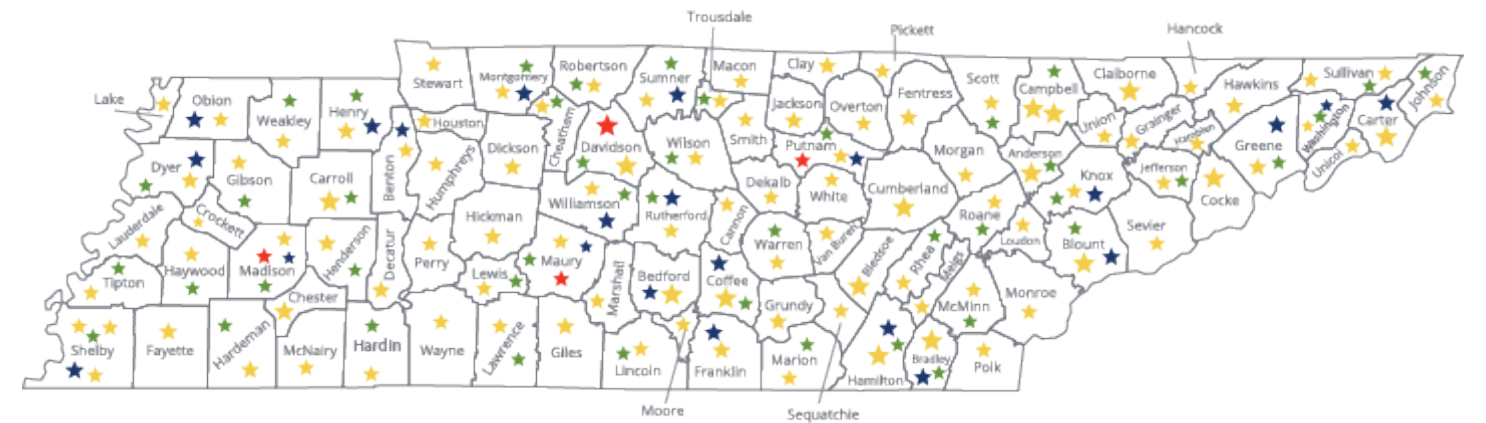
DHS Core Values

- High Performance
- Collaboration
- Continuous Improvement
- A Shared Vision
- Customer-Centered Solutions



Human Services *AT A GLANCE*

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) consists of multiple divisions on a **mission** to build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services. We have a **vision** of revolutionizing the customer experience through innovation and a seamless network of services. Our **values** center around high performance, collaboration, continuous improvement, shared vision and customer-centered solutions.

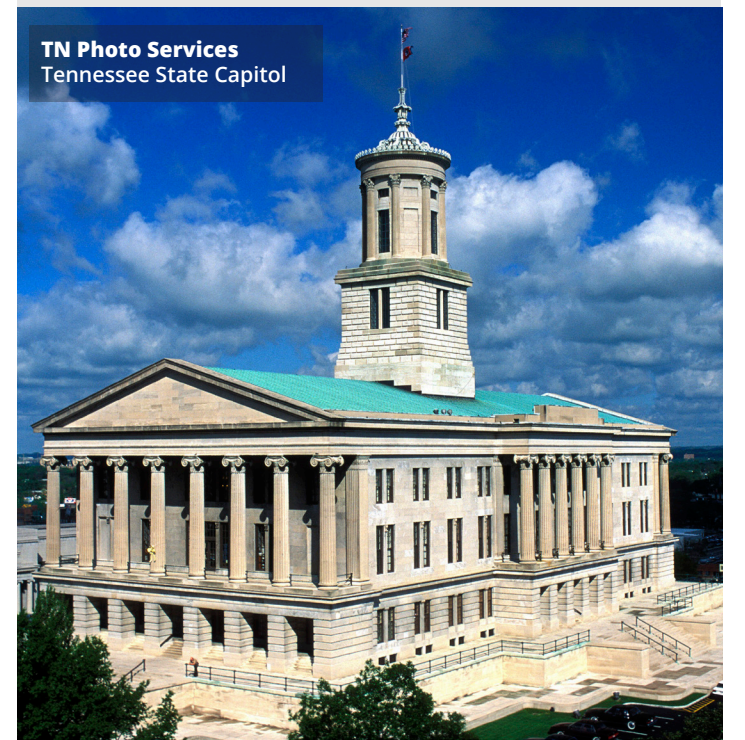


Who We Serve:

The Tennessee Department of Human Services offers an extensive range of social services to a diverse group of almost two million Tennesseans across 95 rural and urban counties in our state. Our broad range of customers includes members of the blind, visual impaired, deaf and hard of hearing communities who attend our rehabilitation centers as well as custodial and non-custodial parents who participate in the child support program. Other customers include child care providers who may apply for licensures through TDHS. Still other customers include families living below the poverty line who may need assistance in obtaining nutrition or career development resources in order to move beyond their current circumstances. We serve these groups and more; however our goal is always the same: build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services with a whole family approach.

- ★ DHS Central and District Offices
- ★ Child Support Offices
- ★ Family Assistance and Child Care Offices
- ★ Rehabilitation Centers and Offices

TN Photo Services
Tennessee State Capitol



Executive Team Leaders

Commissioner- Danielle W. Barnes

Deputy Commissioner of Programs and Services - Cherrell Campbell-Street

- Child Care and Community Services
- Family Assistance and Child Support
- Rehabilitation Services
- Workforce and Education

Deputy Commissioner of Operations - Tony Mathews

- Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions
- Procurement/Facilities
- Budget
- Appeals and Hearings
- Fiscal Services
- Information Technology

Chief of Staff/Assistant Commissioner of the Public Information and Legislative Office - Whitney Page

- Customer Service
- Legislative Services
- Communications

General Counsel - Krisann Hodges

- Legal
- Records

Assistant Commissioner of Human Resources, Talent Management, Learning and Development - Abby Sparks

- Human Resources
- Talent Management Learning and Development

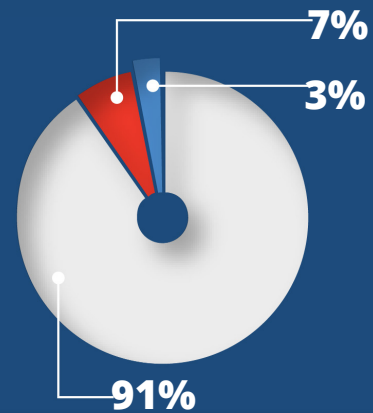
Inspector General - Todd McKinney

- Audit Services
- Program Integrity

DHS BY the Numbers

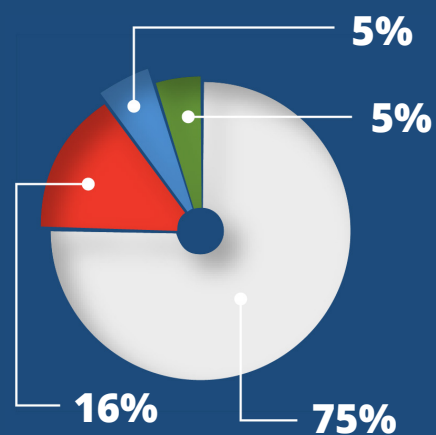
Revenue & Expenditures

Revenue



Federal	2,132,842,386	91%
State	156,344,279	7%
Other	66,590,211	3%
Total:	2,355,776,876	100%

Expenditures



Family Assistance & Child Support	1,762,406,331	75%
Community & Social Services	369,126,871	16%
Administration	108,514,644	5%
Rehabilitation Services	106,729,029	5%
Total:	2,346,776,875	100%

Tennesseans Served

Nutrition Programs

39,000,000

meals served in 2019 through the *Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)* and **30,000,000** meals in 2020 as of June 1, 2020.



3,100,000

served during 2019 through the *Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)* and **3,700,000** meals served in summer 2020 as of July 2020, including meals served when schools were unexpectedly closed due to COVID-19.

Note: The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) operate on a Federal Fiscal Year Calendar.



Vocational Rehabilitation

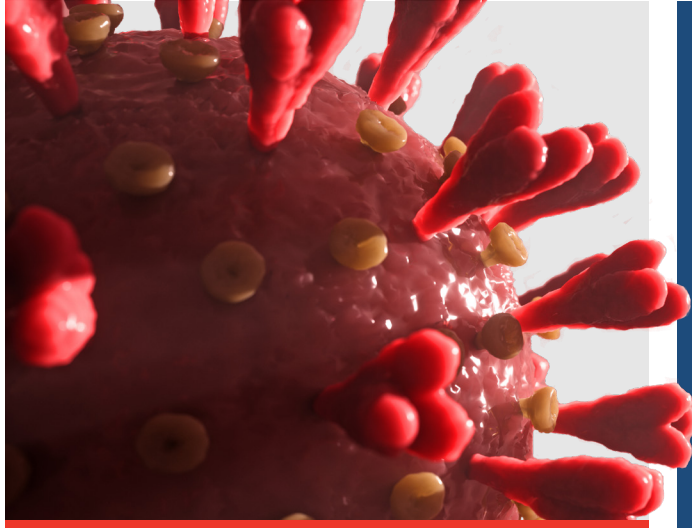
- 1,494 Tennesseans with disabilities achieved their competitive integrated employment goals through the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.
- 4,823 new customers applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- 48 Transition School to Work programs were operated by VR during the 2019-2020 school year.

Over 56,000

pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) were delivered to students with disabilities during the 2019-2020 school year.



- Rehabilitation services increased engagement by 27% among customers from distressed counties. This met a Customer Focused Government goal by reaching a total 553 customers from the 15 distressed counties who were engaged in vocational rehabilitation, independent living and pre-employment transition services.
- 96 customers from the 15 economically distressed counties were engaged in the Independent Living (and Independent Living for the Older Blind) IL/ILOB program during the state fiscal year. This represented a 48% increase from the previous year.
- 714 customers from the 15 counties were engaged in Pre-ETS (Education Transition Services) during the state fiscal year.



COVID-19 RESPONSE By The Numbers

- The Pandemic Child Care Payment Assistance Program distributed \$13,951,727 to parents in “essential” work fields.
- Families First program received over 80,000 Emergency Cash Assistance applications between March and June 30, 2020.
- In June of 2020, TDHS introduced P-EBT, to provide \$5.70 per child for each day that child missed a school meal between March and May 2020 due to school closure.
- Prior to June 2020, 38 Temporary Centers registered with TDHS with a capacity to serve 1,017 children.
- Pandemic Child Care Payment Assistance Program Served 14,527 children from the launch on April 15, 2020 to June 30, 2020.
- Through June 30, 2020, TDHS had approved 1,600 applications for over \$24,000,000 in Disaster/ Emergency grant relief support to child care agencies.
- In March 2020, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which awarded Tennessee \$19.7 million.

Child Care and Community Services

Childcare

- 2,322 Child Care Centers, Child Care Group Homes, Child Care Family Homes and Child Care Drop-in Centers were licensed by TDHS by June 2020 of the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Community Services Block Grant Program

342,844 individuals and 176,908 households in Tennessee were served by Community Action Agencies with CSBG funds.



- 1,927 organizations were able to expand resources and opportunities through the TDHS CSBG Eligible Entity.

Note: The CSBG operates on a Federal Fiscal Year. Numbers provided in all categories are for the period 10/01/2018 to 09/30/2019, as provided in the CSBG Annual Report.



Adult Protective Services

22,892 reports of abuse received

- 9,096 abuse investigations conducted
- 480 cases requiring emergency response

Family Assistance and Child Support

Child Support

\$676,314,069 distributed to families in Tennessee through the Child Support Program during the 2020 state fiscal year. This represents an increase of 10.72% when compared to last year.



- Child Support experienced an 85.67% increase in cases under order. This metric is impactful as families cannot receive collections until an order for support is established.
- As of June 2020, more than \$382,425 child support payments were made via MoneyGram by non-custodial parents.

Families First

- The Families First caseload for June 2020 was approximately 16,448 representing a 13.5% decrease in regular cases since June 2019. Additionally, TDHS processed over 80,000 cases of Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA) related to disaster relief.

28,000 children served through Families First and 6,200 caregivers.



- Average monthly wage of employed participants: \$946
- Average monthly cash Families First Benefit: \$244.86
- The Families First program continues to assist customers who become ineligible due to earned income in transitioning off the program and into position of self-sufficiency through the work incentive payment program. Since implementation in December 2019, 341 families have been approved for work incentive payments.
- An average of 239 Families First cases were closed monthly due to employment from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

More than 433,000 families served through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as of June 2020, reaching 876,023 people. Total issuance \$107,818,322



- Average monthly SNAP benefit: \$248
- **Disaster-SNAP (D-SNAP) to aid victims of March Middle Tennessee Tornadoes:**
- \$792,520 new benefits issued to 2,334 households, impacting 4,576 people.
- \$479,404 supplemental benefits issued to 2,337 households, impacting 4,944 people.
- \$1,271,924 in new and ongoing benefits.

Disaster-SNAP to aid victims of East Tennessee Storms

- \$9,170 issued a total of to 21 households.

Office of Inspector General

- \$8 million in SNAP & TANF overpayments recovered.
- \$10 million related to State Law Enforcement Bureau investigations activity recovered by TDHS through partnership with various Federal & local agencies.

For a more in-depth look at how these TDHS programs are working to build stronger families across Tennessee, continue reading.





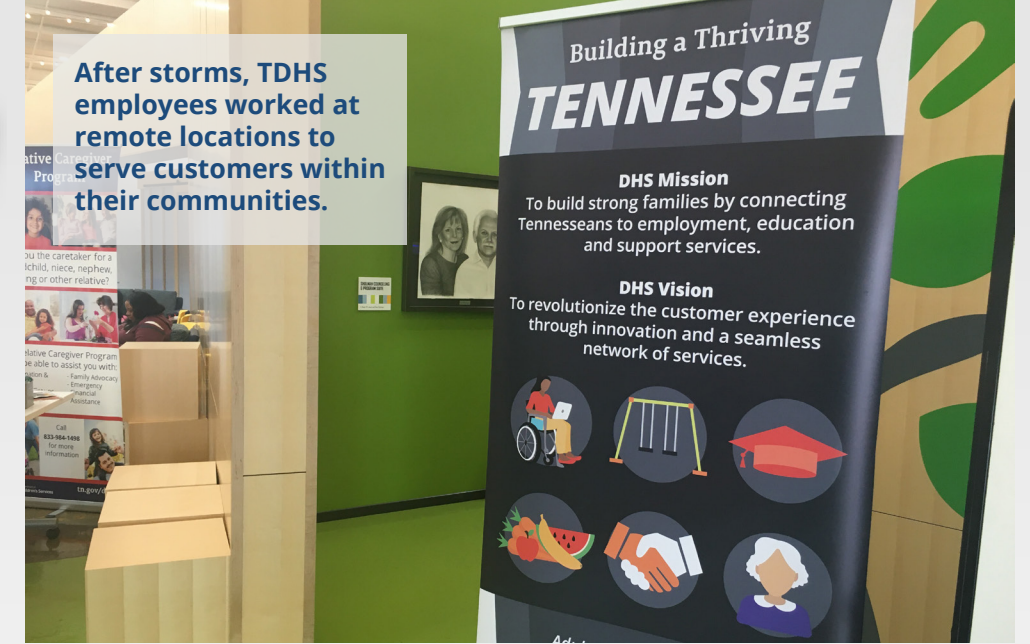
Tornado Response

In the early morning hours of Tuesday, March 3, severe thunderstorms swept across Middle Tennessee, bringing high winds, heavy rain and multiple tornadoes. Communities in Dickson, Davidson, Putnam, Wilson counties, to name a few, were significantly damaged or destroyed. Included in the path of destruction was the TDHS Davidson County Family Assistance Office, located just outside downtown Nashville. A mainstay in the community for 35 years, the Second Avenue office, as it was commonly referred to, housed program staff for all TDHS customer-facing programs, including SNAP and Families First, Child Care, and Vocational Rehabilitation. In a matter of minutes, the building was decimated, but the extent of the damage wouldn't be realized until sunrise.





From Gibson to Morgan Counties West, Middle and East Tennessee was severely affected by 10 tornadoes produced by a super cell that swept across the state.



PATH OF THE STORM

After the storms, thousands of people across the region, including TDHS members, found themselves without power, with storm damage, or with their homes destroyed, including TDHS team members. TDHS leadership took immediate action to address needs with staff at the Davidson County Office, so that the Department could assist with emergency services impacting people impacted by storms within the community.

Anticipating customer needs, in a matter of days, the Davidson County TDHS team was equipped to work remotely, before being relocated to a new temporary office spaces. Staff quickly adapted to perform job functions from three (3) locations to aid Tennesseans in Davidson County. Thanks to the support of, Goodwill Career Solutions Center, Nashville State Community Center, the Honey Alexander Center and other community partners who graciously suspended and interrupted their own operations to allow our customers to be served. Additionally, through rapid technology deployment, Tennesseans were able to complete the Family Assistance pre-application online. Customers called the Family Assistance Service Center (FASC) to complete the application and Eligibility Counselors determined eligibility while the customer remained on the phone.

Through a partnership with Metropolitan Government of Nashville, staff were deployed to locations across the city to assist with critical needs. The Department also worked with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA), to streamline services in areas impacted, and provide notification of services the Department had available. As a result, the following services were made available:

Family Assistance

Emergency Cash Assistance:

In response to the outbreak of tornadoes in March 2020 and May 2020, the Families First program provided Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA) benefits to Tennesseans whose homes were damaged. A total of 1,287 applications were received for this segment of the ECA Program and \$291,250 was distributed to families.

Disaster Benefits:

Family Assistance also received 3,470 D-SNAP applications and distributed a total of \$2,554,018 in benefits. A segment of the SNAP program, D-SNAP benefits are specific to families affected by disasters, like the tornadoes, according to eligibility requirements.

2Gen Partners

The United Way of Greater Nashville connected with other nonprofit agencies throughout the community providing immediate relief to help push energy and resources to support them. They worked diligently to ensure that 2-1-1 had up-to-the-minute information and resources so that those affected by the tornadoes could get the help they needed. They also activated the "Restore the Dream" fund to focus on long-term recovery once the initial disaster relief efforts ended. The Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) began running the copier non-stop, printing packets of vital financial information in coordination with the Nashville Mayor's Office and Legal Aid. FEC reached out to experts in the national network for training on specific, disaster recovery financial counseling, and most importantly information to help vulnerable communities avoid fraudulent predators. United Way worked with staff at McGruder Family Resource Center, volunteers, and Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee to provide a food pantry on Friday, March 13, so that families could re-stock their pantries, and overstock for the next week of school being out. The event served over 150 families in the neighborhood and prepared more than 300 children to be equipped to face underlying food insecurity.

Food Programs

The Child and Adult Care Food (CACFP) and Summer Food Service (SFSP) programs are part of the patchwork of emergency programs that helped to provide meals during the March tornado. The SFSP can operate when school are unexpectedly closed. After the March tornado the Lebanon Special School district utilized the SFSP to provide 700 meals to children as part of the Tornado response. They provided SFSP meals in the community throughout the time that their schools were closed.

Operations

The TDHS Procurement division's Emergency Services Coordinator and two Alternate Emergency Services Coordinators have been activated since March 3, 2020, to address the Middle Tennessee tornado, the global pandemic and the Chattanooga tornado by assisting with human needs request that have been sent to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA).

FINDING

Strength in a Crisis

The Tennessee Department of Human Services is responsible for providing life-altering assistance for nearly two million Tennesseans across 42,000 miles of urban and rural counties. For some, TDHS acts as an enforcement agency for child support, for others TDHS means a chance at independence despite a disability, and for 876,000 residents, TDHS means food on the table during economic hardship. However, what does it mean for TDHS to face a global pandemic that infects every facet of life without respect to person? How does a staff spread across several divisions continue serving existing customers in the midst of an economic downturn that increases need for support services?

The answer is simple: Focus on the values that make TDHS Strong: Customer-centered solutions, continuous improvement, high performance, a shared vision and collaboration. In 2019, TDHS began an agency-wide transformation to move our department toward a more integrated service delivery model. Referred to as "One DHS," the approach emphasizes modernization in operational practices. When COVID-19 appeared on the horizon, it provided an opportunity for our department to accelerate plans to update technology, adjust protocols and harness other division specific tools to continue working to strengthen lives across the state while using our values as guiding principles.

Customer-Centered Solutions

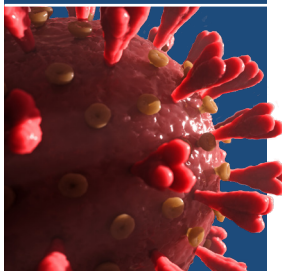
Starting in March, our state's leadership begin taking action to protect state residents and workers. These actions included closing many state offices to "walk in" traffic in an effort to reduce contact opportunities for a disease that health authorities were still struggling to understand. However, this development did not stop the need for TDHS services, rather it increased their relevance as many Tennesseans found themselves with reduced income opportunities. With this development, TDHS divisions found new ways to deliver services and meet customers' needs. The Department supplemented services through immediate technological resources and found creative ways to serve those customers who needed in-person services.

Pandemic Emergency Assistance Programs:

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Tennessee's unemployment rate rose from 3.3 to 15.5 percent between the months of March and April of 2020, before receding in the following months. This meant more Tennesseans needed help to bridge unexpected economic gaps. TDHS met this need by implementing several programs to address the issues facing Tennesseans.



COVID-19 2020 TIMELINE



January 31
U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services declares a public health emergency.

March 3
A tornado hits Tenn. leaving 25 fatalities, 300 reported injuries and estimated \$1.1 billion in damages including the destruction of the TDHS office located in Davidson County.

Emergency Cash Assistance

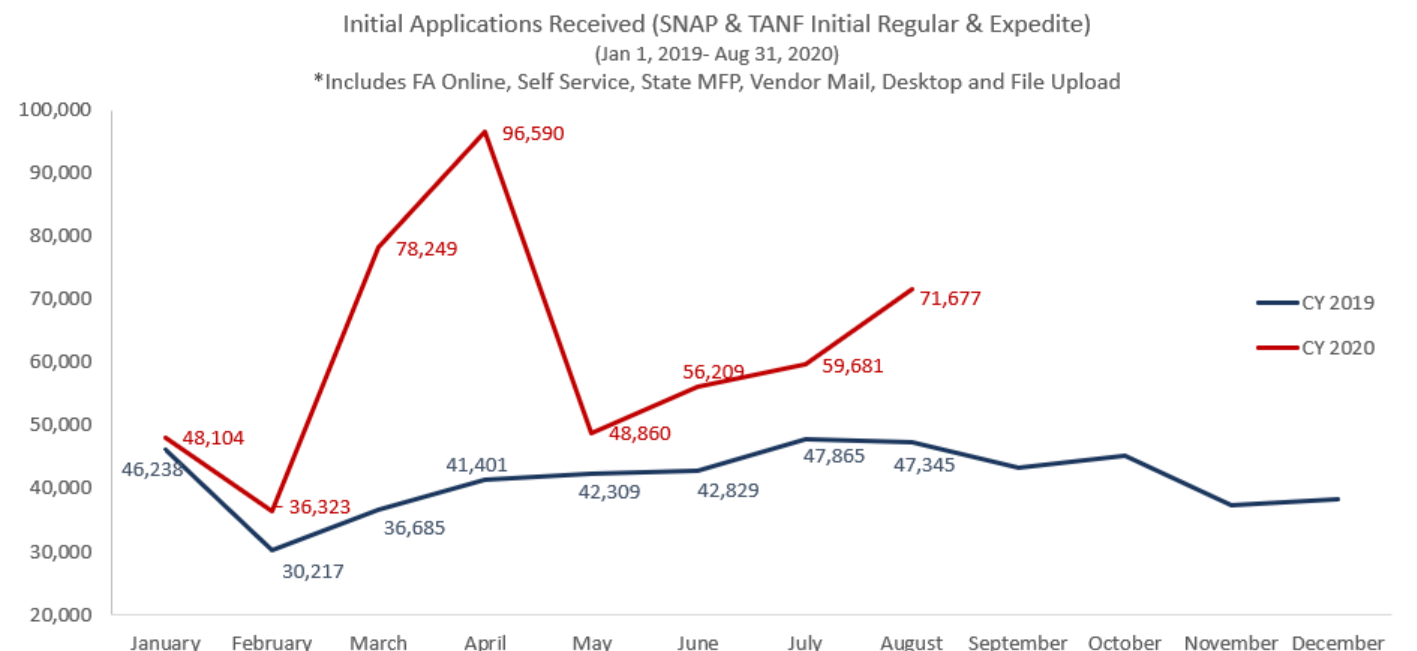
To help Tennesseans adversely affected by COVID-19, the Families First program implemented Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA) benefits for Tennesseans who lost their jobs or experienced a temporary reduction in income or work hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through June 30, 2020, more than 80,000 applications were received in addition to standard Families First applications.

Emergency Cash Assistance Allowed:

- \$500 for a household of 1 to 2 persons.
- \$750 for a household of 3 to 4 persons.
- \$1000 for a household with 5 or more persons.



SNAP and TANF Initial Applications Received



March 4

Tenn. Governor Bill Lee forms a Coronavirus Task Force.

March 5

The Tenn. Department of Health announces the first case of COVID-19 in the state.

March 11

TDHS begins seeking a waiver of statutory and regulatory requirements for the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) in response to COVID-19 developments that depleted availability of some food and milk.

March 12

Governor Lee declares a state of Emergency to facilitate the treatment and containment of COVID-19.

March 13

Governor Lee instructs State employees who are trained and certified to work from home to do so. State employees are also instructed to cease all non-essential business travel through March 31.

March 16

TDHS teams go remote.

March 22

Governor Lee issues Executive order #17 preventing social gatherings of 10 or more and mandates "alternative business models" for businesses across the state.

March 24

Governor Lee extends the work from home order for State employees.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- **Maximum Provisions:** Emergency Allotments were provided to SNAP participants for the months of April 2020 through September 2020. This provision allowed participants to receive the maximum monthly allotment in food benefits for their household size, regardless of income.
- **Feeding Young Minds:** For some children, school meals are a significant part of their daily nutrition. From June 15, 2020 through August 14, 2020, TDHS operated the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program for families of children who received free or reduced meals at school, or attended a Community Eligibility Provision school. This program offered financial assistance to replace school meals lost during the months of March 2020 through May 2020 due to COVID-19 school closures. The program provided parents with \$5.70 per child for each day that child qualified for P-EBT. Tennessee was one of eight states the USDA approved to provide a second round of P-EBT benefits and served as a national role model for other states according to the USDA.

Child Care Programs

The pandemic presented Tennessee parents with several dilemmas including a large reduction in the number of available child care options and the question of how to manage children who were unexpectedly out of school. However, these issues were especially magnified for parents that needed to work during the pandemic. Additionally, child care providers soon had to navigate COVID-19 health and safety considerations in caring for children, as well as sporadic increases and decreases in the number of children they cared for while parents determined whether or not child care was a safe option for them. To address this, TDHS introduced several relief programs:

- **YMCA Partnership:** The Department contracted with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of Memphis and the Mid-South YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee to set up a network of more than 100 temporary/emergency child care services across the State of Tennessee to accommodate school age children with at least one essential worker parent. Following basic health and safety criteria as established by the Child Care and Development Block Grant and recommendations from the Centers for

March 27

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is passed by the U.S. Congress.

March 30

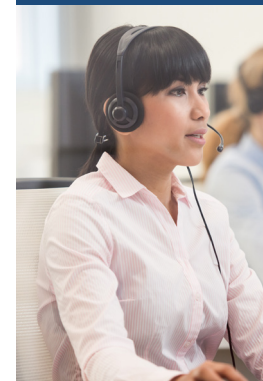
Governor Lee issues Executive Order #22 which mandates discontinuing all "non-essential" business through April 14, 2020.

April 2

Governor Lee issues Executive Order #23 requiring Tennesseans to stay home except for essential activities.

April 6

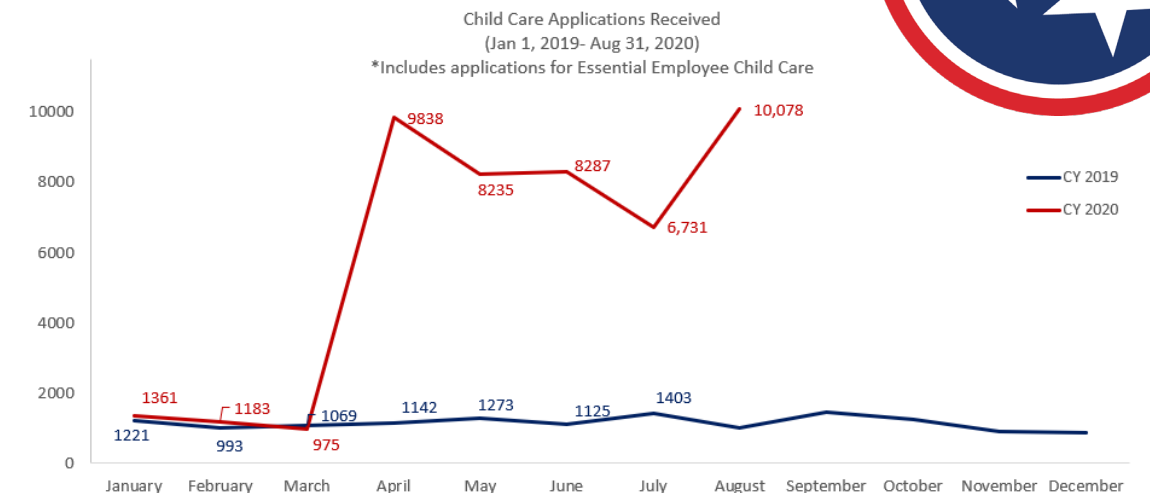
TDHS launches a special hotline to meet the needs of ECA applicants.



Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), these facilities acted to fill gaps in licensed child care availability. The Department provided the payment for these facilities so that essential employee parents could have access to free child care during the public health emergency. Each week during the Summer of 2020, more than 3,600 children were served by the YMCA and nearly 1,700 served by the Boys & Girls Clubs.

- **Temporary Emergency Child Care Location Guidance:** Under the state of emergency, and in response to the need following destructive March storms, many organizations stepped up to offer temporary group care facilities for school age children. Recognizing the need for temporary childcare, TDHS provided guidance for families and organizations regarding group care. The guidance did not serve as a substitute for licensure but provided a framework for temporary operations. TDHS also maintained a list of registered agencies and assigned TDHS staff to routinely contact the agencies to offer technical support. *Prior to June 2020, 38 Temporary Centers registered with TDHS with a combined capacity to serve 1,017 children.*
- **Stability Though Child Care Payment Assistance:** The Child Care Certificate Program provides a means for eligible parents to receive child care payment subsidies. To encourage stability for both parents and child care providers, TDHS continued to make subsidy payments for all children enrolled in the certificate program through the end of June 2020. Payments encompassed all participating child care agencies, including those agencies who were closed or where children were not attending due to COVID-19. Additionally, Child Care Certificate Program co-pay fees were waived and all child care assistance eligibility periods were extended for six months beginning in March. TDHS leadership acknowledged the value of retaining enrollment as means of breaking cycles of poverty and intended to reduce stress and contribute stability and relief with the understanding that many families temporarily lost their jobs due to the impact of COVID-19. Approximately \$13,951,727 was spent on Pandemic Child Care Assistance from April 5, 2020 to June 30, 2020.

Child Care Applications Received



- **COVID-19 Pandemic Employee Child Care Payment Assistance:** The Department established the COVID-19 Pandemic Employee Child Care Payment Assistance program to provide free child care to families with a parent identified as an essential employee under the COVID-19 state of emergency. This time-limited program works to support families so they may continue working as a until the state of emergency desists. The program is not income based and caters to families with children ages 6 weeks to 13 years enrolled in licensed care programs. This category of care served 14,527 children and provided approximately \$13,951,727 in aid from the launch on April 15, 2020 to June 30, 2020 As a result of the ongoing pandemic and impact on families, the program has been extended to December 2020.
- **Disaster/Emergency Response and Recovery Grants Programs:** TDHS partnered with the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee to administer Disaster/Emergency Response and Recovery Grants to support licensed child care agencies who were impacted by the March 3rd tornadoes or COVID -19. Starting March 24, 2020, child care agencies were able to apply for grant money to recoup some of their losses and expenses. Categories of support included: Loss of Income; Resource & Recovery Operations Cost; Equipment, Materials & Supplies; Consultants and Coaches. **Through June 30, 2020, TDHS had approved 1,600 applications for over \$24,000,000 in Disaster/Emergency grant relief support to child care agencies. At the time of this publication approximately \$58,000,000 in grant relief support had been provided.**

Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)

In March 2020, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which awarded Tennessee \$19.7 million to be contracted to organizations. In June 2020, the TDHS CSBG Unit began issuing CSBG CARES Act Supplemental contracts to all 20 CSBG funded community action agencies to help them provide COVID-19 relief and supplemental services.

Adjusting Procedures to Urgent Demand

Many TDHS Programs adjusted program procedures to better serve customers in the new COVID-19 environment.

- **Waiving Interview Requirements:** Many TDHS programs such as Families First and SNAP include an interview as part of the application process. Although in-person interviews function to help both TDHS representatives and customers understand guidelines, requirements, expectations and provide customers with a sense of security, they also have the potential to increase the spread of COVID-19 and slow down case processing. With an increased caseload due to COVID-19 related needs, and with approval from federal partners, TDHS programs with interview requirements streamlined the application process and waived the interview requirement for new and existing customers from April to August 2020. Families First customers who experienced unemployment or were unable to participate due to COVID-19 could also be granted good cause for required work activities.
- **Embracing Flexibility:** Under COVID-19 related Executive Orders, TDHS had discretion to relax child care rules as a progressive means of allowing currently licensed and temporary child care operations to appropriately respond to the situation and serve their communities. Categories of flexibility included: capacity; care categories; groupings; substitutes and volunteers; agency transfers to temporary locations (substitutes and volunteers who may be assisting in order to meet ratios could only care for children unsupervised, if they had completed the background check process). Additionally, the Child

April 13

A tornado occurs in Hamilton and Bradley Counties damaging 150 buildings, causing power outages, nine fatalities and many injuries. Governor Bill Lee extends the "Stay at Home" order until April 30.

April 15

Governor Lee instructs schools to remain closed for the remainder of the academic year.

April 17

Pandemic Child Care Assistance Program launched.

April 24

TDHS extends the deadline for replacement SNAP for customers affected by the April tornado.

April 28

Executive Order #30 released requiring businesses associated with large gatherings, such as recreational and entertainment venues to remain closed and limiting social gatherings to 10 people (exceptions: weddings, worship services, funerals), allowing certain other businesses to re-open with restrictions, and providing further guidance on re opening.

Care Licensing team quickly established a process to allow emergency child care centers to register to provide care and meet parent needs.

- **Service Delivery with Remote Tools:** Starting March 23, 2020, TDHS took steps to protect staff and customers by reducing opportunities for virus contagion. This meant greatly reducing traffic in various TDHS offices and emphasizing the use of virtual tools.

Family Assistance worked closely with TEMA, vendors, partners, and other entities to ensure that Tennesseans were safely provided with assistance through modified processes. Offices transitioned to meet customer needs and case management services through a combination of self-service and virtual tools combined with telephone, and appointment-only in-person assistance. The Child Support program took similar steps in closing offices and leveraging available communication tools to work with vendors, other agencies, and the courts to ensure services could still be provided in a safe manner.

The Department also utilized new ServiceNow technologies to offer ease of access to the Emergency Cash Assistance and COVID-19 Pandemic Employee Child Care Payment Assistance programs. Families were able to submit applications, upload necessary documentation, review status updates and receive notifications on their case from the convenience and safety of a network device.

Continuous Improvement and Programmatic Agility

At TDHS, our goal is to continually improve the way we do business. This year that meant accelerating transitional plans and leveraging technology to continue uninterrupted, efficient, service delivery to each and every customer.

Keeping our Staff and Customers Safe

COVID-19 requires many new precautions to keep staff and customers safe. Here are some of the measures taken by TDHS to ensure safe delivery of services:

- **Pre-screening and Proceeding with Caution:** Until 2020, some of our program areas, such as Child Care Licensing and Adult Protective Services routinely conducted services such as investigations and



May 6

The Tenn. Economic Recovery Group releases additional guidance for recreation, offices, lodging, construction and manufacturing, small group, and non-contact recreation businesses to open on May 8, 2020.

May 11

TDHS implements revised child support guidelines to align requirements with changing family economics.

May 12

Governor Lee extends the State of Emergency to June 30, 2020.

May 12

The Economic Recovery Group issues updated guidance for restaurants, retail and larger venues in 89 counties to reopen on May 22.

May 21

TDHS expands the COVID-19 Pandemic Child Care Payment Assistance program to support parents in all classifications of essential workers in need of childcare and hosts the first Virtual Resource Fair to help Tennesseans find jobs.

May 22

State plans for a phased approach for returning to work in State buildings with new COVID-19 safety measures in effect and on May 29, 2020, TDHS announces and implements new COVID-19 precautions for all visitors entering office lobbies.

evaluation visits in person. However, the coronavirus changed the way we do business.

In the case of Adult Protective Services (APS), change initially meant limiting in-person investigations to Priority A (emergency) reports. However, it has developed to mean asking COVID-19 screening questions on every intake report and formulating a detailed list of practices for conducting investigations. These practices include social distancing, conducting interviews outside or with communication tools (phone, email, video), using face coverings and other PPE, assessing living environments by looking through doors and windows, reducing travel and taking other CDC recommended precautions.

In the case of Child Care Licensing, proceeding with caution meant a suspension of routine monitoring visits during the onset of the pandemic in an effort to reduce health risks and related stress for providers, children, and TDHS staff. Child Care Licensing continued to monitor complaints and to perform necessary actions related to complaints. TDHS also offered technical assistance and guidance to agencies while tracking the impact of COVID-19 on these agencies. The Child Care Licensing team has since initiated virtual and desk visitations and monitoring, in which they review licensing standards with child care directors through video calls and constant technical assistance via email and phone calls.

- **Maintaining a Healthy Workforce:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) established two new types of paid leave benefits for employees beginning April 1, 2020. TDHS Human Resources (HR) implemented procedures to begin processing Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Expanded Emergency Family and Medical Leave as soon as it became available to employees. TDHS HR worked closely with the Tennessee Department of Human Resources (DOHR) to ensure the application and interpretation of the federal leave benefits are provided to all TDHS employees that are eligible and qualify. TDHS HR met the challenge head on by forming a TDHS COVID-19 Response Team. Additionally, the division created and delivered training on the FFCRA to TDHS supervisors to help them understand the leave



benefits and how it applies to employees. These steps helped to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and related work delays.

Going Virtual

One primary focus of TDHS's transformation centers around finding modern tools to streamline services. COVID-19 worked to accelerate the transition to conduct more tasks through virtual operations that removed barriers and reduced long-term cost while allowing the department to scale services, systematize procedures and maintain better records.

- **SNAP Employment and Training Services:** The SNAP Employment and Training Program (SNAP E&T) is a partnership between TDHS and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) that allows eligible SNAP recipients to receive job-training opportunities. TDLWD worked quickly to make virtual services available to SNAP recipients and TDHS worked with TDLWD to request additional natural disaster and pandemic funding. As a result, the SNAP E&T Program was approved for additional 100% administrative funding in the amount of \$253,474 to continue the implementation of Tennessee's SNAP E&T Program.
- **Connecting in New Spaces:** To adapt to the COVID-19 environment, many TDHS programs are connecting with customers remotely. One example is the Workforce Council which routinely holds resource fairs where job seekers can connect with employers, trainers and related resources. Working with TDLWD's Tennessee Talent Exchange, WFC adapted to conduct its first virtual resource fairs as a pilot project.

High Performance

- **Facing the Crisis Head On:** HR led the effort to create processes and procedures to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 from an employment perspective. The Department formed the TDHS COVID Response Team, a cross-divisional team comprised of HR (Employee Relations, Protected Leave, and Shared Services), Office of General Counsel (OGC), and Public Information and Legislative (PILO) staff. The COVID Response Team works closely with the Department of Health, Department of Human Resources, and Department of General Services to respond to incident reports, questions, and concerns related to COVID-19. This team also created proactive communication and training for TDHS employees and managers on COVID-19 related accommodation requests, personal protective equipment (PPE), social distancing, and other common issues related to COVID-19.

June 1

The USDA announces that SNAP recipients can now use benefits to purchase food online.

June 12

TDHS announces changes in its Adult Protective Services operations to ensure health risk reduction for customers and staff.

June 10

Governor Lee announces pop-up testing sites for business employees.

June 15

TDHS partners with the Tennessee Department of Education to provide Pandemic EBT for to compensate for school meals lost during school closures.

June 29

TDHS extends P-EBT and Governor Lee extends the State of Emergency to August 29, 2020 and extends provisions for government meetings subject to transparency to continue virtually.

June 30

TDHS announces the extension of ECA.

- **Knowing is Half the Battle:** The Community Service Block Grant Program (CSBG) is responsible for administering funds to Community Action Agencies that combat poverty in Tennessee communities. To understand COVID-19's impact on these agencies and their customers, the CSBG Unit requested agencies to share developments, such as confirmed case numbers among clients, office closings and other relative information. This data was utilized to prepare a disaster tracker to maintain information about our agencies and form action steps to better serve our state.

- **Keeping Our Children Fed:** TDHS staff refused to let COVID-19 prevent their work to serve food insecure children. As schools began to close due to COVID-19, our Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) operators filled in to help serve meals to children who no longer had access to meals served in school. Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and SFSP operators and TDHS staff worked together to implement multiple United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) waivers that have allowed the programs to continue to operate while implementing social distancing and safety precautions.

- **Helping Separated Parents Support Their Children:** Our Child Support program is responsible for facilitating Genetic Testing and Voluntary Acknowledgement(s) of Paternity (VAoP). When lobbies and offices across the state closed due to COVID-19, Child Support and Vital Records staff immediately began working together on a solution that would allow parents to complete a VAoP through the mail. TDHS worked with the Tennessee Department of Health and Patient Service Centers to secure alternate sites and reroute customers from Child Support offices for collection. The vendor provided additional training to staff and individual offices to find creative ways to provide services to parents needing to establish paternity including drive up testing options.

Child Support Services also rose to the occasion when many courts suspended in-person child support hearings during the early stages of the pandemic. Staff worked quickly to notify parents of the cancellations and offer alternative options for pending matters and worked closely with the courts to continue filings, process agreed orders, and to complete modifications through the administrative order process.

- **Maintaining Momentum From Outside the Office:** TDHS's mission is made possible through a combination of 3,661 front-line program staff and administrative support divisions. In 2016, TDHS began implementing Alternative Workspace Solutions (AWS). As of June 2019, 1,404 TDHS employees were participating in AWS, categorized as either "work from home" or "mobile" at least three days per week. This represented 38% of the total employee count (3,666) at that time. In response to COVID-19 and Governor Lee's Safer at Home request, TDHS increased the number of employees participating in AWS. As of June 2020, 2,953 TDHS employees are participating in AWS. This represents 80% of the total employee count (3,661) in June 2020. However, adjusting to life outside the office has not prevented TDHS from forming a strong response to the increased number of cases and customers.

- **Welcoming New Members in the Middle of a Crisis:** Transitioning to an AWS focused model offered an opportunity for TDHS HR to rapidly adjust its onboarding process of New Employee Orientation to take advantage of available technology while still providing a personalized experience for new staff. TDHS HR established weekly WebEx events so that new staff across the state would be able to complete New Employee Orientation while working remotely. This weekly event is hosted by HR staff members on a rotational basis. By making use of the camera features, new staff are able to receive a personalized welcome, create networks and relationships with other new hires. **As of June 30, 2020, TDHS HR hosted 15 virtual New Employee Orientations to onboard 76 employees across the state of Tennessee.**

- **New Hiring Practices Under COVID-19:** COVID-19 also created new challenges for TDHS hiring managers. To support hiring managers as they adapt to conducting virtual interviews, Talent Management Learning and Development (TMLD) developed a virtual interview process and toolkit for hiring managers. This new process and toolkit include tips and best practices on conducting virtual interviews and a virtual recruiting brochure.

Sharing the Vision: Crisis Communication and COVID-19

Sharing your vision with stakeholders is imperative to achieving any organization's mission, but especially crucial in a crisis. As TDHS faced COVID-19, intentional communication played a key role in ensuring that staff, partner organizations and customers alike were met with proactive messaging and able to access up-to-date information on programs, procedures and ongoing developments. The Department's Public Information and Legislative Office (PILO) worked across divisions to both lead and, in other cases, support communication efforts to ensure that both internal and external audiences understood both the gravity of the COVID-19 situation and how we could find strength as we faced it together.

Being Social

It's no secret that social media is a powerful tool for spreading information about TDHS programs. Since March 2020, TDHS has worked on several levels to share information with customers using social media tools. These efforts include:

- Working with outreach agencies to replace in-person outreach to SNAP-eligible populations during COVID-19 with safe practices such as social media posts, mailings, public displays, telephone outreach and encouraging SNAP-Ed agencies to create and release online videos and content to keep customers informed.
- In addition to answering phone inquiries, the TDHS Customer Service team coordinated with program areas to manage customer queries on a variety of topics and responded to



inquires submitted through Facebook pages and messages.

- PILO created and shared content on COVID-19 relief programs as well as updates to other TDHS programs affected by COVID-19 using multiple online media channels including Google Ads, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

Constant Communication

With the onset of the pandemic, TDHS realized that as a service organization responsible for the lives of many Tennesseans, it was and is imperative to provide clear communication and updates on a regular basis.

- **Regular Updates:** To keep Tennesseans informed about the available services, service changes and other related adjustments, TDHS began sending regular communication to several customer groups such as child care providers. Additionally, COVID-19 updates were communicated through established weekly e-mails to external partners, such as CSBG agencies, and internal stakeholders, such as TDHS staff.

In addition to these communications, our CSBG Unit issued TDHS CSBG Emergency Guidance Memorandum on April 20, 2020 to provide flexibilities and guidance to aid in service delivery during emergency circumstances. In May, this was followed up with an FAQ document and Town Hall meeting that offered further clarification of CSBG policies and procedures. Counties across the state were represented by the 40 participants.

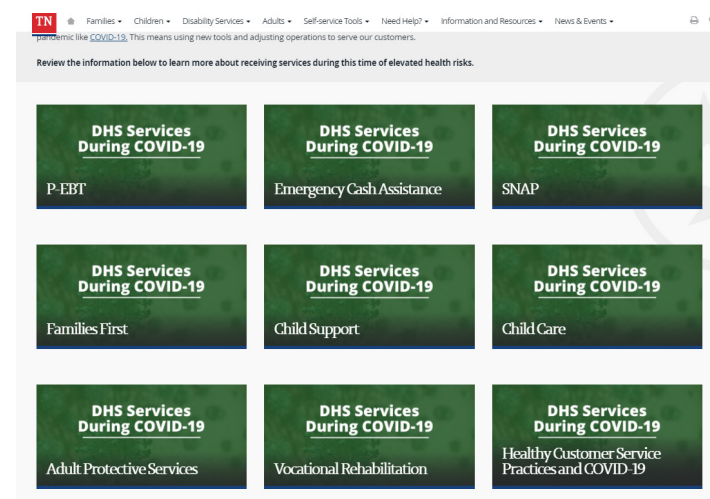
- **Using Our Website to Full Potential:** To better serve customers and partners, TDHS



created several COVID-19 specific landing pages. Links to these pages were placed on the TDHS homepage to allow easy access for customers and many pages were updated daily to provide information on program announcements, application procedures, and relative changes. Similarly, PILO created COVID-19 specific pages on the TDHS intranet to keep staff informed.

Collaboration and Partner Engagement

TDHS understands that many organizations across our state share our desire to build strong families and in recent years, TDHS has become more intent on leveraging partnerships with organizations that address the needs of shared customers using a multilayered approach that addresses the needs of multiple generations. Commonly referred to as 2Gen partnerships, the importance of these partnerships was only magnified by COVID-19. Here are some examples of how our partners are continuing



to serve Tennessee families despite COVID-19:

- **Expanding Operations:** The Store, a TDHS partner organization that offers free groceries to referred individuals and families experiencing food insecurities and financial hardships, expanded its options and grocery options and begun operating with a curbside pickup model as a result of COVID-19.
- **Care Packages:** Martha O'Bryan Center worked diligently to distribute emergency food (crisis boxes, senior boxes, and groceries on wheels) and household essentials (diapers, formula, toilet paper, cleaning supplies) to over 15,780 non-unique families and provided COVID-19 awareness and prevention materials such as PPE with the Pull Up Neighbor program. Additionally, 225 families received financial support as a result of the March tornado and COVID-19.

Working for A Common Good

- **Connecting the Needs with Support:** The Department collaborated with our 2Gen partners to evaluate the needs of families and modify their existing services to reallocate current funds to better respond to families facing COVID-19. This inspired many partner agencies to support families with personal protective equipment, diapers, food, and rent/utility assistance. Other aid included virtual learning support, youth camps, community cafés, and wellness activities, telehealth platforms and resources to address technology gaps and accessibility. Families also received a list of available free pandemic resources, as well as safety precaution and social distancing information. COVID-19 care packages were also delivered to families. The kits included green cleaning supplies, a comprehensive Green & Healthy Homes Residents' Manual, healthy snacks and a case of bottled water donated by community organizations.
- **Case by Case:** TDHS joined forces with United Way of Greater Nashville to expand their existing Family Empowerment pilot program with a Case Manager. This role will serve the unique needs of families in the North Nashville area who are recuperating from a natural disaster, COVID-19 and other challenges.
- **Adaptive Learning For Cross Divisional Support:** COVID-19 combined with the spring tornadoes led to an influx of Tennesseans in need and a spike in TDHS applications for Emergency Cash Assistance, SNAP benefits and other relief programs. To meet this intense time-sensitive rise in applications, TDHS used a cross-program staffing solution. Vocational Rehabilitation staff worked jointly with Family Assistance to process applications and Child Care Assessment staff joined Child Care Payment teams to process Child Care Certificate program applications. This cross divisional effort found many team members working in unfamiliar applications and in desperate need of immediate training.

TMLD quickly and efficiently responded to this need by creating and delivering critical learning resources that equipped temporary relief workers with the knowledge needed to assist customers. The learning resources included a series of videos, resource guides and virtual training sessions on Emergency Cash Assistance, SNAP/Families First, ServiceNow, Access Management, TCCMS, and COVID-19 Pandemic Employee Child Care Assistance.

TMLD also aided efforts with iLearn classes in Johnson City, Clarksville, Jackson and Memphis for case processing units with oversight, supervision, and support provided virtually by iLearn facilitators and managers. TDHS iLearn courses provide frontline staff and supervisors training for important everyday program procedures and TDHS standards. Between April – June 2020, class attendees processed 28,780 applications.

Meeting Our Customers Where They Are

TDHS is comprised of multiple divisions working together to make sure each and every Tennessean is afforded resources that foster productive healthy lives. With offices across the state, our Programs and Services division is comprised of four customer-facing subdivisions, each with a focus on a particular area of life support.

Child Care and Community Services

The Division of Child Care and Community Services is tasked with ensuring standardized care and assistance for Tennessee children and adults who may be unable to care for themselves in a safe and healthy manner. This TDHS Division includes Child Care Services, Adult Protective Services, Community Services Block Grant and the Social Services Block Grant Programs subdivisions.

Child Care Services

The Child Care Services subdivision is responsible for planning, implementing, and coordinating activities and programs that ensure quality treatment, accessibility, wellness and safety of children and adults in care. This is accomplished through child (and adult) care licensing, child care assessment and child care payment assistance programs.

“Every family should have access to quality care for children and adults.”

Child Care and Community Services Leadership

Jude White
Assistant Commissioner

Gwen Laaser
Child Care Services Director

Renee Bouchillion
Adult Protective Services Director

Patrick Hamilton
Director of Operations

Avé Trotter
Community Services Block Grant Program Director

Child and Adult Care Licensing

Child and Adult Care Licensing is the regulatory body that licenses and monitors child and adult care facilities across Tennessee with the goal of ensuring the safety and health of young children and vulnerable adults in care. Rating results are made available on the TDHS website.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

- **Transforming to Mobile:** Child and Adult Care Licensing launched an electronic monitoring checklist mobile app for field staff responsible for on-site monitoring/evaluation visits to childcare agencies. The app streamlines data management, increases monitoring efficiency, accelerates reporting timelines and allows field staff to focus on relationship building and observation.

- **Facilitating High Standards and Increasing Options for Parents:** To assist child care providers in achieving higher standards, TDHS instituted Enhancement Mini Grants. Available to TDHS licensed agencies, these grants specifically support quality improvement, compliance with licensure rules and capacity enhancement. Grant funds could be used to help agencies make purchases to improve services for example.
- **Helping Providers Build Better Agencies:** Having a strong child care agency is not only about care: Administration is important for parents, children and staff, especially in a global pandemic when communication and safety standards are paramount. To help Tennessee agencies build stronger organizations, TDHS made resources such as Shared Services, business management, human resources, program, classroom and other tools available including bulk purchasing and discount pricing available to providers to ease administrative burden of operations.
- **Fostering Talent Management:** Any organization is only as good as its workers. This is especially pertinent when it comes to those providing care. To encourage professional development of the child care workforce and to enable licensed child care agencies to attract and retain qualified staff, TDHS launched the Child Care WAGE\$® Program statewide. This program is an education-based salary supplement program for child care educators providing an annual award, issued in two parts, based on specific qualifications. Tennessee is one of six states nationwide that offers this program to strengthen child care quality by incentivizing a qualified child care workforce.

A look at the Numbers

By June 2020 of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, TDHS licensed a total of 2,322 child care facilities as follows:

- 1,732 Child Care Centers
- 326 Child Care Group Homes
- 245 Child Care Family Homes
- 12 Child Care Drop-in Center

Child Care Certificate Program

Better known as the Child Care Payment Assistance program, this initiative provides child care payment support to families who are working, in post-secondary education programs, participating in the Families First program, and other parents/guardians who are working to improve their family's prospects. Payments are made directly to participating providers.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

- **Customer-Centered Application Solutions:** In March 2020, the Child Care Certificate Program launched its online application. This convenient solution allows parents/guardians to apply and submit eligibility documentation online while observing COVID-19 safety practices and ensuring consistent record keeping. This was a timely milestone as the number of online applications submitted rose from approximately 5% in January 2020 to 85% in June 2020.
- **22% annual increase in licensed child care provider participation in the Child Care Certificate Program:** A total of 1,639 child care providers now participate in the Child Care Certificate Program.
- **19,506 children were served through the Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance Program.** Smart Steps helps parents that are working and/or in school with child care costs that are sent directly to participating licensed child care providers.

- **Early Literacy:** Through our partnership with Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation, there have been 32,811 TDHS children registered through the Tennessee Child Care Management System and referred for enrollment as of June 30, 2020 to receive the monthly gift of books.

Child Care Assessment Program

The Child Care Assessment Program provides a detailed, objective, formal report to child care educators/agencies. Program staff use a quality measurement instrument to assess each licensed provider annually as part of the Star-Quality Report Card Rating and Evaluation System for child care facilities. The program was suspended in March 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19 on the application of the assessment tool. The Department continues to explore a Quality Rating and Improvement System that measures key indicators of quality that drive successful child outcomes.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

- **Transforming the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS):** The Child Care Services subdivision’s QRIS is used to evaluate and report on the quality of agency child care. With the help of consultants and extensive study, TDHS has embarked on a redesign that will streamline reporting and provide information based on the metrics that matter to families and research supported positive outcome predictors.
- **Collaborating to Meet Provider and Family Needs-** In 2019-2020 TDHS began conducting focus groups among providers and families to give specific feedback about the big ideas for redesigning the QRIS and forming advisory groups to help direct attendance tracking and payment processing systems for certificate providers.

Child Care Resource and Referral Centers (CCR&R)

Child Care Resource and Referral Centers are free child care location and counseling services located in communities across the state. Parents can receive information regarding the components of quality care and what to look for when choosing quality care. CCR&R’s also provide technical assistance, training and support for child care providers across the state.

Empowering Talent to Improve the Quality of Care

Comparatively speaking, the human brain is most receptive during the first five years of life. Having the right teachers to guide early education during this critical developmental stage can be a crucial part of a child’s trajectory. Unfortunately, many talented would-be early education and child care workers choose other career paths due to concerns about wages in relation to the cost of living. However, TDHS is working to remedy this situation for the sake of our state’s children.

In 2019, TDHS launched the WAGE\$ program. This program works to incentivize early childhood educators working at TDHS licensed childcare agencies by offering salary supplements based on specific qualifications.

“We love what we do and we are constantly trying to make children’s lives better. And Wage\$ has really given us more opportunities to stay in our field and be financially stable,”

“We love what we do and we are constantly trying to make children’s lives better. And WAGE\$ has really given us more opportunities to stay in our field and be financially stable,” said Jessica Shoop, an early childhood class instructor at North Side Learning Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Both Jessica and her sister, Caroline Shoop, who works at the same agency, are passionate about their work in early childhood development and able to continue guiding young Tennesseans due to benefits provided by the WAGE\$ program.

“We want to teach other kids that are growing up that working in a day care, working with young children, is just as great as working with middle school, elementary, or high school (children),” said Caroline.

The Shoop sisters are just two of 848 child care professionals participating in the WAGE\$ program. The program awards \$400-\$5,200 annually to child care professionals based on qualifications. These mini grants are significant to the workers who typically earn an annual salary under \$40,000 for caring for one of our state’s most important treasures.

“Everybody should have equal opportunity to achieve their highest potential in partnership with their families and communities.”



The Power of Partnerships: Community Services Block Grant Program

Established through the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981, the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is a federally funded grant program that aims to combat community poverty by removing barriers to self-sufficiency. TDHS administers the CSBG program through a network of partnerships with 20 community action agencies that provide services to eligible low-income individuals and families in each of the state’s 95 counties. These partners provide services that include, but are not limited to emergency utility assistance, Head Start, services for senior citizens, transportation assistance, employment assistance and more.

With the help of TDHS, Tennessee’s Community Action Agencies served 342,844 individuals and 176,908 households with CSBG funds.

Note: The CSBG operates on a the Federal Fiscal Year. Numbers provided in all categories below are for the period 10/01/2018 to 09/30/2019, as provided in the CSBG Annual Report.

CSBG Community Action Agency (CAA) Partners:

West Tennessee

- Delta Human Resource Agency
- Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council
- Shelby County Community Service Agency
- Southwest Human Resource Agency

Middle Tennessee

- South Central Human Resource Agency
- Mid-Cumberland Community Action Agency
- Metropolitan Action Commission
- Highland Rim Economic Corporation
- Clarksville/ Montgomery County Community Action Agency
- Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency

East Tennessee

- Anderson County Community Action Committee
- Bradley-Cleveland Community Services Agency
- Blount County Community Action Agency
- Chattanooga Human Services Department
- Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority
- Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee
- Mid-East Community Action Agency
- Mountain Valley Economic Opportunity Authority
- Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency
- Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency

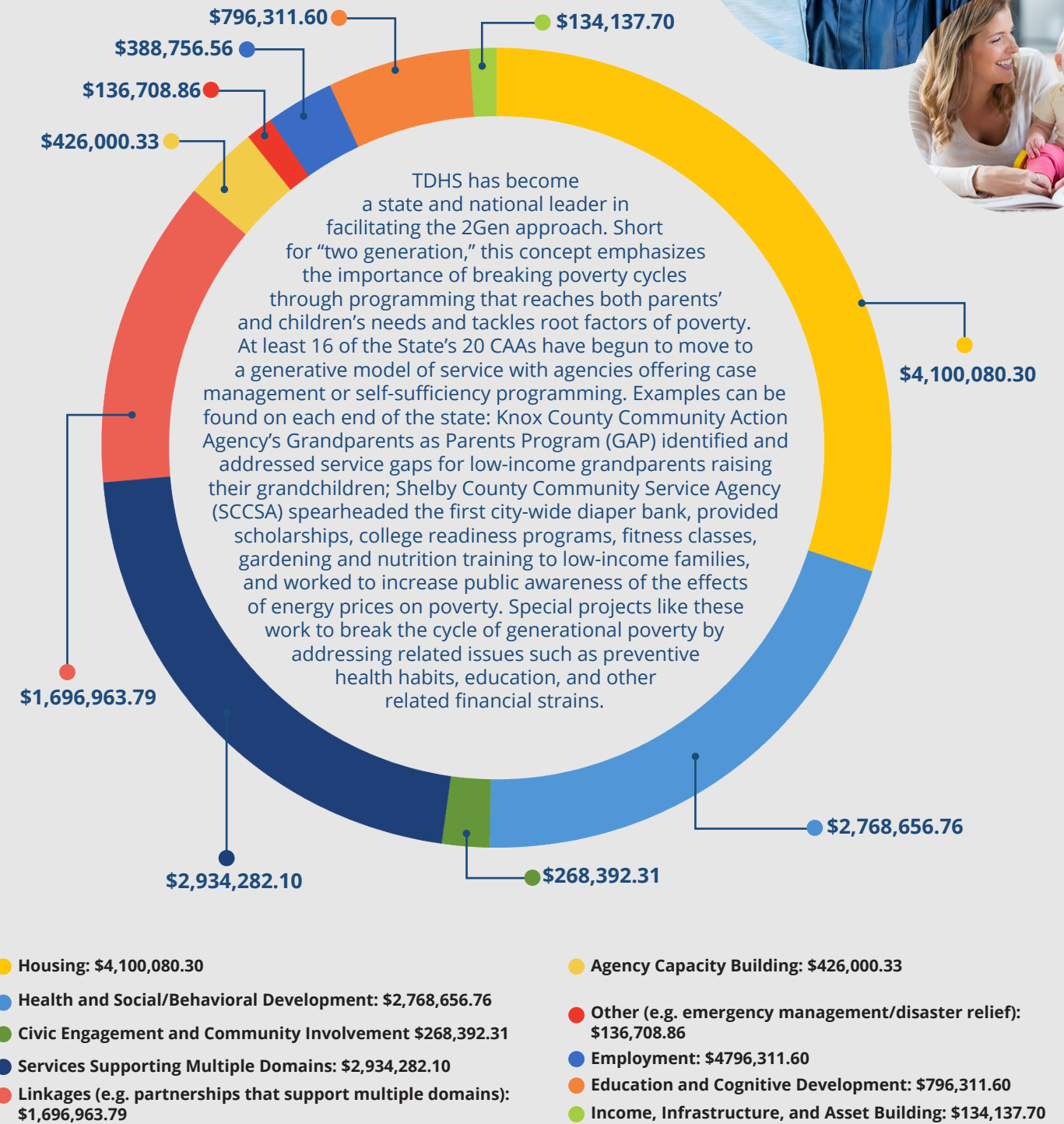
Through our 20 CSBG CAAs (also referred to as Eligible Entities), TDHS actively works to expand resources and opportunities to over 2500 public and private organizations dedicated to achieving family and community outcomes.

Focusing on Results: In recent years, CSBG has worked with the Tennessee Association of Community Action (TACA) to acquire Transition to Success training certification for CSBG staff members and meet regularly scheduled training benchmarks for partner agencies. With an emphasis on consistent growth and improvement in state organizations, the Transition to Success model builds heavily on the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework and emphasizes practices such as motivational interviewing, brain science, and trauma-informed approaches. This year, TDHS leveraged this training to train each CSBG partner agency across the state in the Transition to Success practices. This will lead to increased agency capacity and service delivery improvement.

Staying Current: CSBG is scheduled to review the CSBG Policies and Procedures Manual in preparation of the new FY21 contracts. Our goal is to stay prepared for possible administrative updates and flexibilities needed to be considered for short and long-term program management.

Facing the Opioid Crisis: In 2020, CSBG special project funds were used to combat the opioid crisis through partnerships with the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA), Upper East Tennessee Human Resource Agency (UETHRA), and the Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council (NWTEDC). UCHRA's efforts encompassed forming a collective impact initiative to meet the needs of the opioid epidemic on behalf of all nonprofits in the Upper Cumberland region and included hiring a Regional Coordinator to facilitate collaboration with partner organizations, resource sharing and funding development to establish and sustain a Substance Abuse Solutions department. In the western part of the state, the NWTEDC conducted opioid addiction outreach to the Hope Outreach Center in Weakley County. Each of the projects were made possible through work with the CSBG.

INVESTING IN the Whole Family



CUSTOMER Testimonial

“I walked into Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) as a single mother going through a long drawn out divorce with part-time work as a direct support employee at the local nursing home. My dream was, one day, to enroll in college and become a nurse. I had secured low-income housing for myself and my girls but had very little financial or moral support. That day I was emotional, stressed, and feeling overwhelmed. After meeting with the staff at the Fentress County UCHRA office and being introduced to the Self-sufficiency Training and Results (STAR) program, I felt excited and hopeful for my future.

I enrolled in the STAR program and met my case manager, Balinda Westmoreland, who believed in me even more than I believed in myself. When I felt like quitting, she reminded me how far I had come, and we worked together to overcome barriers.

This was a new way of life for me and it wasn't easy. I had two beautiful daughters, a part-time job and a new role as a full-time nursing student, but also had an ongoing divorce and had not yet received any child support, a part-time job, and a new role as a full-time nursing student. I enrolled my daughters in Head Start and child care with the help of my STAR case manager and began my new life that included budgeting, credit repair and income management. I graduated from Tennessee College of Applied Technology and became a Licensed Practical Nurse on February 14, 2019 and had employment secured upon my graduation. On June 26, 2019, I exited the STAR program as self-sufficient and have since enrolled in the RN program at ETSU. I have married, bought a house, and welcomed a new baby boy!

I am happy to say I am living my life to the fullest and I have become successful. Thank you Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, my case manager and the STAR program.”

**-Brittany Keeler Hunsucker,
Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency Customer**

Brittany is just one of 145 participants in the UCHRA STAR program. Consistent with the 2Gen approach, STAR programming focuses on the whole family in working with partners such as TDHS to connect participants with “employment opportunities and educational and supportive services leading to long-term economic success and self-sufficiency.” (reference <https://uchra.org/communityservices/>). In 2019, UCHRA served over 50,409 individuals through a variety of 35 programs available to residents of 14 of Tennessee’s 95 counties. However, UCHRA is just one of 20 DHS CSBG Agency partners making a difference in our state.





Protecting the Most Vulnerable: Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) investigates reports of abuse, neglect (including self-neglect) or financial exploitation (of government funds) of adults who are unable to protect themselves due to a physical or mental limitation.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

Partnering to Proactively Prevent Financial Abuse: Hard copy financial records can easily become a tool for fiscal exploitation of vulnerable adults. To celebrate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) on June 15, 2020, TDHS partnered with the Greater National Regional Council, the Council on Aging, Metro Nashville Police Department, the Collaborative Response to Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse (CREVAA) and You Have the Power to shred 8,000 lbs. of paper. Shred on the Run provided 207 participants a safe and secure means of disposing documents containing personal information that could be used for exploitive purposes.

Strategic Standardization: In order to better serve our customers and assist APS staff, TDHS is developing an APS decision making-tool. Combined with new case management standards and onboarding procedures, this will help TDHS to efficiently meet our state's needs and promote consistency and strength-based operational approaches that enhance human resource management. These efforts are supported by new internal communications practices.

A Focus on Communication: In 2020, APS began The Monthly Chatter, a staff newsletter and forum for two-way communication on news and APS developments.

Streamlining Collaboration Between Departments: APS works with the Tennessee Department for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) to find the best solutions for vulnerable Tennesseans who may be experiencing or at risk of abuse. APS is currently working with DIDD to establish a Memorandum of Understanding that streamlines processes for accessing Employment Community First Services, confidentiality and permissible sharing of investigative information and coordinated joint due process/abuse registry placements.

2019-2020 By The Numbers:

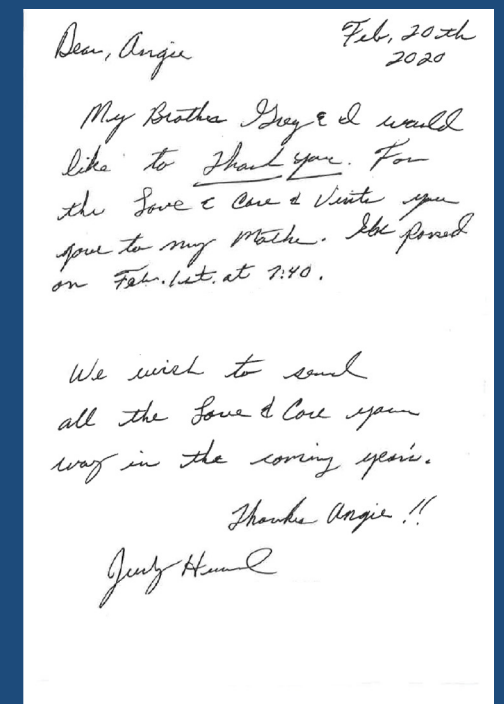
- 22,982 Reports of abuse
- 9,096 Investigations based on reports
- 480 Investigations resulting in emergency (within 24 hours) response
- Allegations Reported in 2019
 - 3,182 cases of emotional abuse
 - 4,591 cases of financial exploitation
 - 8,671 cases of neglect
 - 2,892 cases of physical abuse
 - 7,777 cases of self-neglect
 - 600 cases of sexual abuse



CUSTOMER Testimonial

Dear Angie, my brother Greg and I would like to thank you for the love and care and visits you gave to my mother. She passed on February 1st at 7:40. We wish to send all the love and care your way in the coming years. May the kindness return to you in the same beautiful way it was given.

- Judy,
Daughter of APS Client



These words were written by the daughter of an APS client in a card to APS Investigative Specialist Angie Alley. Months earlier during the fall of 2019, APS received reports regarding the neglect of an East Tennessee resident and Specialist Alley was assigned to the case. Upon investigation, Specialist Alley discovered that the client was cared for by family, but additional support was needed. Specialist Alley worked to explore the options with the client and her family, and facilitated acquisition of needed items through CREVAA and a referral to First Tennessee Human Resource Agency's Homemaker program. Both the client and her family were grateful for the extra support. Months later, at the dawn of 2020, the client died, but the family had not forgotten the dedication of Specialist Alley and wished to express their thanks for the care received.

FIGHTING FOOD INSECURITY IN TENNESSEE -Nutrition Programs

Roughly one in seven Tennesseans does not know where their next meal is coming from and one in five children suffers from food insecurity.

According to the latest annual report released by Feeding America, the “nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization,” food insecurity in Tennessee rested at around 14%* in 2018. *Note reference Feeding American Website, <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/tennessee>.* That number is expected to rise with COVID-19.

Tennessee has multiple programs that aim to address food insecurity in our state. Two of these programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) are administered by TDHS in agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

“Together,
we can help
end hunger in
Tennessee.”

Program Leadership

Allette Vayda
Director of Operations

Debra Pasta
Program Manager

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP provides reimbursements for nutritious meals to adults and children who meet age and income requirements. Eligible participants include:

- Children enrolled in child care institutions who are 12 and younger
- Children of migrant workers who are 15 and younger
- Persons of any age with one or more disabilities who are enrolled in an institution
- Child care facility serving a majority of persons who are 18 and younger
- Adults who are enrolled in adult care institutions that serve functionally impaired adults or persons who are 60 or older.

CACFP completes its mission by partnering with eligible institutions such as child and adult care centers, child care homes, emergency shelters and after-school care programs for at-risk children.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

For too many Tennessee children, school lunch may be the only meal they receive. Established by Congress in 1968, the Summer Food Service Program provides reimbursements for nutritious meals served to qualifying families during periods when their schools are closed for vacation. The program focuses on children 18 years of age or younger in regions where unfavorable economic conditions exist and residential camps where eligibility is individually determined. Additionally, eligibility extends to adult Tennesseans who are mentally or physically disabled and participating in school programs for the disabled. The program functions through the aid of community partners, known as sponsors. Sponsorship is limited to the following entities:

- Public or private, nonprofit school food authorities
- State, local, municipal or county governments

- Residential public or private, nonprofit summer camps
- Public or private, nonprofit colleges or universities administering Upward Bound Programs
- Public or private nonprofit organizations.

Eligible feeding sites include public parks, recreation centers, schools, churches, playgrounds, residential camps and public housing complexes.

Both the SFSP and CACFP were modified beginning in March 2020 due to federal waivers issued by USDA in response to COVID-19. The CACFP and SFSP programs are part of the emergency network providing meals to families impacted by COVID-19. These waivers will remain in place through at least June 2021.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

• Over 60 million Meals Served:

- The CACFP served roughly 39,000,000 meals in 2019 and 30,000,000 meals in 2020 as of June 1, 2020.
- In summer 2019, the SFSP served approximately 3,100,000 and served 3,700,000 meals as of July 2020, including meals served when schools were unexpectedly closed due to COVID-19.

Note: The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) operate on a Federal Fiscal Year Calendar.

- **Transforming Through Modern Tools:** This year our food services programs implemented the Tennessee Information and Payment System (TIPS), an online case management, application and claims process, for SFSP and CACFP. This tool streamlines processes such as case tracking, record keeping and communication with partners.
- **A Customer-Centered Approach:** To enhance the customer experience, the food programs increased staffing and a shifted to a case management operational approach.
- **Training for High Performance:** We partnered with the Institute of Child Nutrition to increase staff training opportunities and leveraged a \$100,000 grant from the USDA to focus on an increase in local-level training and technical assistance.



FAMILY ASSISTANCE & Child Support

The Family Assistance and Child Support Division offers programs and services that provide or support families in strengthening their households.

“Partnering with Tennessee families to meet their essential needs and propel them toward success.”

Family Assistance and Child Support Leadership

Charles Bryson
Assistant Commissioner

Lisa Francis
Director of Operations (Field Services)

Keisha Thaxton
Director of Operations (Policy and Contracts)

Sherron Brown
Director of Operations (ACCENT/TCSES Solutions)

Patricia Wood
Director of Operations (Field Services and Contracts)

Robert Duck
Director of Operations (Policy and Services)

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

- **Application Processing:** Families First and SNAP applications significantly increased beginning in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the months of March 2020 through June 2020, approximately 261,800 applications were received, almost double the applications from the same period last year. By streamlining the intake process statewide to equalize the volume of applications, Family Assistance was able to keep the SNAP timeliness above 93% and TANF timeliness above 97%.
- **Enterprise System Modernization:** Family Assistance (Families First and SNAP) has embarked upon an endeavor to modernize the legacy eligibility system, ACCENT. This will include the design, development, and implementation of a new Family

Assistance system that includes, but is not limited to: A transfer or commercial-off-the-shelf Family Assistance system that provides integrated eligibility determination, as well as Family Assistance benefits management, appeals tracking, and claims management

- **Partnerships with Local Libraries to Meet Customer Needs:** The Families First program partnered with libraries in Carter, Monroe, Perry, and Warren counties, as well as West Eastland Church of Christ in Sumner county, to provide meals for families during the summer break. Through these efforts, approximately 4,856 meals were provided, and family enrichment activities took place.
- **Prisoner Pre-Release:** In collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Corrections, Family Assistance implemented a pre-release interview process to simplify the re-entry process for newly released inmates. Since March 2020, 260 Tennesseans have been able to

have applications approved with their release date as the start date for SNAP benefits. This system of services assists newly released inmates to acclimate to life after prison, so that they can position themselves to live independently and reach their employment goals.

- **Increased Partnership through SNAP Employment and Education Program:** In 2020, the SNAP E&T Program added the following third-party partners to our program to collaborate with and serve vulnerable communities:
 - **The Contributor (Nashville):** Provides financial literacy, work readiness, transportation, birth certificates, social security cards, and clothing to homeless populations in the Metro Nashville area
 - **Metropolitan Action Commission (Nashville):** Provides adult education, financial literacy, transportation, and child care
 - **Century Harvest Farms Foundation (East Tennessee):** Provides work readiness training, vocational/technical training, and work experience
- **SNAP Outreach Partner Organizations:** Partnering agencies have assisted over 111,037 individuals by providing information about SNAP, pre-screening, and application assistance, in addition to providing community support services such as providing food via mobile food banks, legal services, employment training and assistance, GED, financial counseling, case management, and housing assistance.
- **SNAP Online Purchasing - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participants Can Now Shop for Groceries Online:** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved Tennessee for a program that allows SNAP benefits to be used to buy food online through Amazon and Walmart. Families can access this resource by entering their Electronic Benefit Card (EBT) information on Amazon’s SNAP dedicated website or by following the guidelines Walmart has established for SNAP online purchasing. The program began in June 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing SNAP participants an opportunity to safely purchase food. In June, SNAP participants made nearly \$10,000 in grocery purchases from Walmart and nearly \$9,000 in grocery purchases were made from Amazon.
- **Guideline Updates:** Child Support staff, IV-D magistrates, private attorneys and other interested parties started a review in 2017 to update Tennessee’s Child Support Guidelines which are used to determine the amount of support owed. The updates became effective in May 2020. The revised Guidelines include required changes to comply with Federal Rules such as a self-support reserve for low-income customers, allowing review and adjustment of support orders for incarcerated individuals, and clarifying factors that must be considered before inputting income to establishing an order.
- **Enterprise System Modernization:** The Child Support Program kicked off a project with Deloitte on April 1, 2019 to re-platform the Tennessee Child Support Enforcement System (TCSES). This is the first step to modernizing TCSES which first came online in 1995. This project will modernize the system’s infrastructure by moving to a cloud environment and implementing to a modern programming code. TCSES is the first application in state government to be hosted in a cloud environment.
- **Payment Kiosks:** The Child Support Program placed payment kiosks in Chattanooga, Memphis and Nashville offices, providing another convenient option for non-custodial parents to make child support payments. The three kiosks have processed child support payments totaling more than \$1,140,000.

- **Text Messages:** The Child Support Program continued to use bulk text messaging services to improve customer service during SFY 2020. Staff created target campaigns to locate custodial parents with child support collections on hold. These efforts helped disburse more than \$1 million in additional collections to families across the state.
- **Employment Program Expansion:** The Department expanded the Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program (TCSEPP) into 11 new counties, and now serves 17 counties including five distressed counties. The TCSEPP program helps non-custodial parents acquire skills and employment to help them become successful, rebuild families and pay child support obligations. The Tennessee Partnership for Ongoing Parental Support (TPOPS) program was expanded to include Northeast Correctional Complex in Johnson County. The TPOPS program provides parent education classes, assistance with child support matters and helps newly released parents acquire skills and employment to help them become successful, rebuild their families and pay their child support obligations.
- **Collaboration:** The Child Support Program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) initiated a collaborative effort to support non-custodial parents that are actively receiving SNAP benefits and participating in employment training activities. Child Support will limit the use of enforcement actions such as license revocation, contempt hearings, and other remedies while the non-custodial parent is enrolled in an employment training program. In doing so, the non-custodial parent can fully focus on obtaining sustainable employment prior to re-establishing child support payments. This collaboration jointly served 122 parents.
- **Customer Service Enhancements:** The Child Support Case Resolutions team, in partnership with the TDHS Public Information and Legislative Office has led implementation of ServiceNow, a tool used for tracking and monitoring child support inquiries including phone calls. ServiceNow allows the monitoring of resolution time and the quality of customer service. It also provides a method for identifying any training needs within the program. One future improvement will allow the Case Resolutions team to identify and take proactive steps to prevent repeat inquiries. The Child Support Case Resolutions Team works over 1,900 inquiries per month.
- **Research for Enhanced Services:** Center for Policy Research (CPR) is conducting a comprehensive study of the availability of parenting, employment and fatherhood services across the state. The study will provide information on the availability of services and identify opportunities for the child support program to partner with other agencies and community partners to expand services to parents.

Divisional Programs

Families First

Families First is the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The Families First program helps participants by providing temporary cash assistance, transportation, child care assistance, educational resources, job training, employment activities, and other support and transitional services.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ensures eligible families and individuals with low income receive benefits to supplement their household monthly food budget, maintain good health, and allow them to direct more of their available income toward essential living expenses.

Child Support

Through offices in each of the state's thirty-one judicial districts, the Child Support Program provides the following core services: locating parents; establishing paternity; establishing and enforcing financial and medical support orders; and collecting and disbursing child support payments. In addition to these services, the Child Support Program focuses on family-centered services such as parenting programs, prisoner reentry services, employment assistance, and access and visitation with children.

CUSTOMER Testimonials

Family Assistance Testimonial

Sarah's* husband lost two jobs back-to-back and her family soon began to struggle financially. With three sons, ages 5, 2 and 6 months old, Sarah was a stay-at-home mom, and spent her time caring for her children. After her husband's job loss, she knew it was the right time to find a job to help support her family.

She and her husband applied for the Families First program to receive help due to the unforeseen hardship. Through the Families First Program, TDHS provided the family with cash assistance and a child care payment assistance voucher for a local child care provider. She and her husband also actively participated with TDHS Families First partner, Workforce Essentials, which required them to continuously look for and apply for jobs supported them during their job search. Workforce Essentials also helped the family by providing gas cards each week.

After about a month to a month and a half of job searching, Sarah and her husband both found jobs, with Sarah working for the State of Tennessee and her husband with a large packaging and delivery company. In less than 30 days, her husband was promoted to a night shift supervisor. *"I am thankful for DHS and Workforce Essentials for dedicating their time, work ethic and extending their hands to help my husband and I when we were in terrible times of financial distress. I thank the State of Tennessee for their services and workers."*

Child Support Testimonial

Marcus* was referred to the Child Support Parent Employment Program (CSPED) in 2018. At that time, he was not making child support payments and had multiple outstanding arrest warrants. During his enrollment, he was asked two questions: do you want to pay your support, and do you want to work? Derrick answered both questions with a definitive "yes!". Since enrolling in CSPED, he's seen his life change for the better. He completed a job training class, received assistance with the court expungement process, reduced court fines, and managed to get his driver's license reinstated. This was the first time in 14 years he was able to have a valid driver's license. Marcus is now a sales manager within a local car parts store and is paying his current child support and towards his child support and accrued arrears. Marcus was ready to give up and felt overwhelmed before enrolling in CSPED, but he has achieved goals that he felt were always beyond him. His latest achievement is buying a car. He hopes many other non-custodial parents will benefit from CSPED in the future.

*Names Changed

REHABILITATION Services

The Division of Rehabilitation Services aims to be a partner committed to strengthening communities through intentional person-centered services and collaborative partnerships. This division supports Tennesseans with disabilities as they work to achieve their employment and independent living goals. This branch of TDHS has a variety of departments dedicated to vocational partnerships, transitional services, accessibility, self-advocacy, and many individualized services all meant to ensure that no Tennessean is defined by their disability, but able to leverage their strengths, resources, abilities and capabilities to find the right setting to make a contribution to our state's community and economy.

This year, the nation celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Vocational Rehabilitation program and our own Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), marked this year by having an introspective look at who we serve, how we serve, and, just as important, why we serve.

“Helping all Tennesseans reach their potential.”

Rehabilitation Services Leadership

Mandy Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

Selina Kirkland
Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers Network Director

Kevin Wright
Director of Operations

James Stanfield
Disability Determination Services Director

Kim Maltempo
Strategic Business Solutions Director

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

- **Leveraging Technology to Better Serve Our Customers:** Over the last year, VR staff diligently worked to implement a new case management system that will support business processes and increase efficiency for both staff and customers. Divisional staff from multiple programs have been involved on multiple teams responsible for configuring the system, ensuring that data is successfully migrating into the new system from the legacy system, designing interfaces with third parties, providing early testing feedback, and identifying training issues. The new system is set to go live in May 2021 and will set the stage for future technology transformations.
- **Person-Centered Training:** In August 2020, the Rehabilitation Services kicked off statewide person-centered training for ALL Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff as part of a plan to transform VR services and revolutionize the customer experience. This year-long endeavor will include multiple staff training sessions and serve as a critical building block in the division's on-going transformation that will inform the future of VR including how staff engage customers, how services are delivered, and ensuring that VR policies and business processes support and enhance the person-centered philosophy.
- **Policy Revisions:** Over the last year, the division has been reviewing VR policies and procedures to better align with the overall transformation of the VR program. The revisions are being completed in phases and are scheduled to conclude in Spring 2021. The first phase included a



user-friendly redesign of the VR Policy and Procedure Manual that ordered each section of the manual to follow the customer journey through the VR program. The second phase has been focused on reviewing the policies to identify and remove unnecessary restrictions on staff and overly prescriptive language where possible.

Additionally, the review of policies has and will continue to include a focus on identifying strategies for applying person-centered philosophies to policy.

- **Business Services Unit Expands Collaborative Partnerships:** One of the key services that VR's Business Services Unit (BSU) performs is increasing awareness of VR and educating businesses on the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities across the state. To date, the West Region BSU has connected with 181 businesses, 81 of which are newly formed relationships. Through this network of partners BSU staff have increasing potential of new partnerships and encouraged more businesses to actively seek and hire individuals with disabilities.

One such example is the recent workshop, “How to Hire and Work with Individuals That Have a Disability” that the BSU hosted, in partnership with the Jackson County Mayor and the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce. State partners, including the American Job Centers (AJC) and Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD), were in attendance, along with local partners, such as Volunteer Behavioral Health, Jackson County School System, and the Upper Cumberland Workforce Development Board. The event was also attended by local employers, such as Dairy Queen, Mabry Health Care, and Ansi-America. All entities were there to exchange information on recruiting, retaining and supporting employees with disabilities and the associated legalities including tax benefits. Additionally, the event provided a forum for employers and workforce partners to network, address concerns and hiring needs, and build bridges.
- **Moving Beyond the Workshop Model to Customer-Centered Solutions:** One former means of training in the Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers (CTRC) were workshops that taught CTRC customers job skills by using contracted work orders from regional businesses. However, TRC Managers believed these mass training sessions did not best serve customers as each individual's needs were unique. Consequently, in the Fall of 2019, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program began working to identifying existing gaps in VR services, Pre-Employment Training Services (ETS), and the untapped opportunities within the community in an effort to reimagine CTRCs that better serve their local areas, address the unique needs of the local community, and provide greater value to the VR program statewide.

Subsequently, the decision was made to eliminate the workshop/work order program in January 2020 with a goal to cease all contract work in all CTRCs by June 30, 2020. However,

the COVID-19 health crisis accelerated this process and suspended large group training in the CTCs and work orders were permanently eliminated by March 16, 2020.

In the absence of contract work, CTC staff are creatively working to provide individualized remote or virtual job readiness services to prepare customers for employment.

Additionally, staff are continuing to explore customer-centered innovative service delivery. Many of the CTCs have developed relationships in the community to provide on-site, integrated training with a goal of employment at local businesses. Staying engaged with the business community and informed of workforce opportunities continues to keep us focused on transformation and closing the gap on employment between people with disabilities and people without disabilities.

- **Increased Collaboration with Transition Partners:** VR continues to increase partnerships between employers and school transition programs. One partner, Project SEARCH, a 12-month transition program that provides a combination of “classroom instruction, career exploration and hands-on training through worksite rotations” (*Note: Project Search Website <https://www.projectsearch.us/transition-to-work/>*), is planning to open two new program sites with one anticipated to be launched in the fall of 2021.
- **A Focus on Distressed Counties:** This year VR continued its Transition School to Work (TSW) outreach to distressed counties and secured new TSW applications from Jackson, Perry, and Wayne counties during the May application period. VR’s efforts also ensured that all six existing distressed county participants (Lauderdale, Hardeman, McNairy, Grundy, Bledsoe, and Cocke) re-applied for TSW funding. As a result, 60% of Tennessee’s distressed counties will receive TSW funds, representing a 20% increase over last year. In addition to these efforts, VR has been working with the network of community rehabilitation providers to provide more emphasis on growing work-based learning and employer partnerships within school communities while revising contract procedures to ease financial burden.
- **High Performance with Transition Tennessee:** A partnership with the Department of Education, Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt Kennedy Center’s University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), Transition Tennessee provides an online training and resource hub for students with disabilities who are making the transition from high school. The initiative has proven to be a resounding success as a resource for students and parents, and valuable forum for educators, providers, VR, and other stakeholders in the disability community.

With a current base of 6,000 users, platform growth is expected to continue with VR staff actively promoting the tool to stakeholders, including staff, Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), and Transition School to Work (TSWs). Staff are also actively involved in presenting and participating in several Transition TN webcasts and Virtual Transition Fairs. Users can also expect content expansion to continue also with components being added including courses on Connecting with Employers and Providers and Introduction to Self-Advocacy as well as a curriculum database that allows users to investigate school options.

- **Innovative Responsiveness:** In light of the COVID-19 crisis, the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) campus closed on March 14, 2020. Within two weeks of closing, students began reaching out to instructors asking for work to keep them moving forward in their vocational goals. Area of Study Instructors did not hesitate in using email and phone calls to share assignments to interested students. After TDHS leadership determined that the campus would stay closed for the summer quarter, the DRS Director of Operations worked with TRC leadership to select an on-line platform that could meet students’ needs

through distance learning. After selecting Google G-Suite Classroom, TRC staff immediately began training to learn how to use the platform. Within two weeks they had re-written curriculums, lesson plans and developed new courses to offer in the distance learning model. Admissions staff and Advisors begin contacting and registering students while determining equipment needs. In cases where students required support, Advisors worked with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to obtain equipment for students.

184 current students were offered an opportunity to participate in distance learning to continue building on skills already obtained in their area of study and approximately 130 students elected to participate.

The quarter began on June 22, 2020 with a week of platform use training, general orientation, student and instructor expectations, distance learning etiquette and protocols on contacting Advisors and tutors

- **Serving Our Community on Personal Level:** Disability Determinations Services (DDS) staff collected donations and supported the Ms. Cheap Penny Drive for Second Harvest in the amount of \$619.11 in donations that translated into more than 2,400 meals. Staff also made contributions to the local Women’s Rescue Mission and The Opal at Music City Nursing Home during the holiday season.
- **Celebrating Excellence:** In November 2019, the Atlanta Regional office announced three PRIDE award winners from the Tennessee DDS:
 - Dr. Thomas Thrush for the Mary Simmons Special Act of Service
 - Kimberly Joseph for the Thomas M Leahy Creative Achievement Award
 - Dr. Sara Bomar for the Robert R. Hinrichs DDS Humanitarian Award
- **Transforming Case Management for 2021:** Over the last year, VR staff have been diligently working on the implementation of a new case management system that will support their business processes and increase efficiency for both staff and customers. Many staff from across program lines within the division have been involved on multiple teams responsible for configuring the system, ensuring that data is successfully migrating into the new system from the legacy system, designing interfaces with third parties, providing early testing feedback, and identifying training issues. The new system is set to go live in May 2021.
- **Person-Centered Training:** In August 2020, DRS kicked off statewide person-centered training for all Vocational Rehabilitation staff – Counselors, Business Employment Consultants, Pre-Employment Specialists, Support Staff, Supervisors, TRC Smyrna, CTCs, Tennessee Business Enterprise, Independent Living, Central Office staff and Leadership. This began a yearlong endeavor to transform and inform how staff engage customers, how services are delivered, and ensure that VR policies and business processes support and enhance the person-centered philosophy.
- **Policy Revisions:** Over the last year, the division has been reviewing VR policies and procedures to better align with the overall transformation of the VR program. The revisions are being completed in phases and are scheduled to conclude in Spring 2021. Revisions include:
 - A user-friendly redesign of the VR Policy and Procedure Manual structured around the customer journey
 - A thorough review of policies to identify and remove unnecessary restrictions on staff and overly prescriptive language
 - Identification of strategies for applying person-centered philosophies to policy.

Divisional Programs

Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) provides a variety of individualized services to persons with disabilities in preparation for their employment in the competitive labor market. VR advocates employment outcomes for customers that are consistent with their individual strengths, resources, abilities, capabilities and informed choice.

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or have vision loss. Rehabilitation teachers and assistants enable customers to live more independently in their homes and communities. Additionally, the unit operates the Tennessee Business Enterprises program (TBE), which provides entrepreneurial opportunities for legally blind individuals to operate food service facilities in state and federal government buildings.

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing (TCDDBHH) has the responsibility for ensuring that state and local public programs and services are accessible to deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and Deaf-Blind citizens. TCDDBHH coordinates communication, information, public awareness, and advocacy services through six regional community service centers.

Tennessee Rehabilitation Center—Smyrna

The Tennessee Rehabilitation Center - Smyrna is a training center that provides Vocational Rehabilitation services through a Career and Technical Education (CTE) design. Through its Areas of Study and enhancement courses, TRC teaches individuals with disabilities the skills needed for employment and independent living that enables students to obtain the proficiency, certifications and/ or credentials needed to succeed in today's labor market.

Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers (CTRCs)

Established in the 1960's in rural areas of Tennessee to provide services to people with disabilities to help them gain work skills, Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers (CTRCs) provide employment-related services to applicants and eligible customers of the Vocational Rehabilitation program. The 17 centers provide vocational evaluation, employee development and employment services designed to assist individuals with disabilities to reach gainful employment.

Tennessee Technology Access Program

The Tennessee Technology Access Program (TTAP) promotes awareness about and access to assistive technology devices and services.

Disability Determination Services

Disability Determination Services processes Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income applications for the federal Social Security Administration.

CUSTOMER Testimonials

Imagine for a moment that you're a 65-year-old farmer living in rural Tennessee. Beyond your day-to-day farm work, you're the primary caregiver for your 93-year-old father. Laundry, meal preparation, scheduling medical appointments, transportation, and medication administration are all responsibilities you take seriously. However, one day you notice that your eyesight is...problematic. Your field of vision is increasingly limited. You learn you have Retinitis Pigmentosa, a rare genetic disorder that causes a breakdown and loss of cells in the retina, leading to decreased vision, but you're a farmer with responsibilities, so you soldier on despite the fact that many simple tasks are becoming more and more challenging. Barriers to everyday activities continue to increase and after multiple falls on the farm and in the community, and a blow to your confidence, you realize keeping calm and carrying on is no longer an option, and decide to contact the Tennessee Independent Living and Older Blind (ILOB) program, a section of the Tennessee Department of Human Services Rehabilitation Services Division. This is the story of Mr. Gary Fisher, who became a Rehabilitation Services customer in October of 2019 and became connected with ILOB Rehabilitation Teacher (RT) Nancy Feist. Together, they worked to analyze Mr. Fisher's needs and formulate a multifaceted plan to build the skills and acquire the tools needed to allow Mr. Fisher to manage his life with a visual impairment.

Mr. Fisher and RT Feist began their partnership with a thorough Daily Living Skills Assessment to better understand Mr. Forester's situation. After reviewing the available benefits, Mr. Fisher took the first step on his journey to independence by choosing the Orientation and Mobility Services program to help with special orientation and navigation. Through partner agency Opportunity East, a rehabilitation division of Volunteer Blind Industries, Mr. Fisher was able to complete his orientation and mobility training prior to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. Later, RT Feist assisted Mr. Fisher in furthering his independence by applying for an iPhone through the Tennessee Public Utility Commission/ Telecommunications Devices Access Program (TDAP). Following COVID-19 safety protocols, RT Feist supported Mr. Fisher in establishing and learning his new communication device to better manage scheduling of his and his father's medical appointments and transportation.

Next, Mr. Fisher learned to use the SmartLux digital Magnifier to read mail, medication administration, meal preparation and many other everyday tasks. Ms. Feist also worked with Mr. Fisher to learn techniques for critical activities such as identifying and storing medication and discovered helpful approaches for domestic tasks such as marking kitchen appliances for easier access that allowed him to again prepare meals for his family, read labels and directions on food packages and cans. Ms. Feist also connected Mr. Fisher with local community agencies and programs that could provide emergency resources to feed his family in the current pandemic climate.

At the closure of Mr. Fisher's case, he reported feeling more confident with his ability to navigate his farm and community and noted that his independence far exceeds what he thought was possible, and he is very thankful for the services received. It's hard for many of us to imagine slowly losing the ability to do simple but relevant tasks such as reading our mail, preparing and understanding medication or being increasingly challenged as we attempt to look after family members -tasks that were formerly very easy. However, it's good to know that there are services and dedicated staff such as Ms. Feist available to help us exceed our expectations and meet our potential should we ever find ourselves against the barriers faced by Mr. Fisher.

TWO GENERATION APPROACH & 2Gen Partners

The Two Generation (2Gen) Approach is a whole-family centered approach that focuses equally and intentionally on services and opportunities for the lives of the child and the caregiver in their lives. These services and supports are not weighted on one side or the other; but it's a delicate balance of focusing on the child and caregiver at the same time to build skills and abilities that fuel stronger outcomes for our families because a child's success is strongly tied to his or her family's stability and well-being.

The 2Gen Approach is also about being innovative and collaborating with our community in a way that moves our children and their caregivers towards educational success, economic security, strong social capital, and health and well-being. This approach builds on those four 2Gen components to create a legacy of economic security that passes from one generation to the next. And when we invest and build up our families from birth to adulthood, we can help everyone reach their potential and enable them to fully contribute to our communities.

With the support of our federal partner, the Department has increased its use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds in a strategic manner to improve family economic security and well-being by expanding our community partnerships to better coordinate systems and sectors that are traditionally siloed. Through the adoption of a 2Gen Approach, the Department is striving to provide innovative solutions to services where the parent or caregiver and the child from the same home are served deliberately and simultaneously. Although the 2Gen Approach is being administered in varying ways throughout our partnerships, research has shown that the use of a whole-family support can lead to better outcomes for both generations of a family and can build economic mobility across generations over time. Nationally, the most effective 2Gen programming include solid connections and coordination between services for the parent or caregiver and the child, making it less challenging for families to participate and succeed.

Since adopting of the 2Gen framework in our service delivery model in 2013, the Department has established nearly 35 community and governmental partnerships and will onboard 24 new additional partnerships by the end of the year to promote better education, economic, and health outcomes for children and their caregivers, at the same time, so that the entire family is on a path towards economic security. By January 2021, the Department will have invested nearly \$225 million dollars and expanded services to 81 of the 95 counties since the implementation of the 2Gen framework. This in turn, contributes to the economic growth in our communities and a more prosperous Tennessee.

Key Accomplishments and Transformational Achievements

- Expansion of inter-agency partnerships to increase services in rural counties with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (Family Preservation Services and Opioid Crisis), and the Tennessee Department of Health (Evidence Based Home Visiting Programs).
- Creation of the 2Gen Family Voice Video Library to allow families and agencies to personally share their stories and the impact of the 2Gen services received as a result of the funding and partnership with the Department.

- The United Way of Greater Nashville's Family Empowerment Program (FEP) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) program gained state and national recognition for their work. TDHS presented along with the United Way at the Siemer Conference, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the Southern Region United Ways, Annual Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance Conference, Nashville Pathway to Housing Symposium, and the first annual "Bridges to Tomorrow, Hope for Today: A Conference on Homelessness".
- TDHS Established a partnership with Methodist Le Bonheur Community Outreach (MLCO), and Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) in Memphis/Shelby County to provide housing navigation services for clients in MLCO's Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program.
- TDHS Established a partnership with Belmont University and The Store, a year-round free grocery store founded in part by Brad Paisley and Kimberly Williams Paisley, to promote the health and well-being to a food desert area of Nashville for low-income families through the Family Wellbeing Program (FWP). The program provides free access to quality food (i.e. fresh produce, dairy, and healthy snacks and dinner options, household items, hygiene products) and access to wraparound services (i.e. counseling, financial literacy/planning, legal assistance/clinics, music therapy, food demonstration classes, health clinic and medication management programs) through the Belmont Ministry Center. The Store also began a new initiative in an effort to provide more options and choices for groceries while operating under the curbside pickup model as a result of COVID-19. Telehealth options were also made available for the health clinic, medication management, counseling, and financial planning.
- United Way of the Mid-South Driving the Dream program has engaged in the Seeding Success K-12 Collaborative, and its two

2Gen Partners (Active during SFY 2019 – 2020)

- A1 Learning Connections
- Agape Child and Family Services, Inc.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Boys & Girls Club of Tennessee Valley (Youth Force)
- CodeCrew
- East Tennessee University – Nurse Family Partnership
- Gideon's Army
- Knowledge Quest
- Knoxville- Knox County Community Action Committee
- Martha O'Bryan Center
- Meharry Medical College – Center for Health Policy
- Methodist Le Bonheur Community Outreach – Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
- Porter-Leath
- Project Return
- Salvation Army
- Save the Children
- Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services – Therapeutic Intervention, Education, and Skills Program
- Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services
- Tennessee Department of Health – Home Visiting Program
- Belmont University and The Store
- United Way of Greater Nashville – Family Empowerment Program and Rapid Rehousing Program
- United Way of the Mid-South – Drive to Dream and Tax VITA
- Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency
- Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis

projects “Together for Students,” a school-based initiative to provide wraparound services to school-age children, and “First Eight, an early childhood initiative to ensure 90% of third-grade children are proficient readers. Seeding Success encourages collaboration among diverse partners by building their capacity to make data-informed decisions that put children at the center; advocates for equity-based policies and funding to remove barriers and sustain improvements; and helps design systems to address disparities. Through the K-12 collaborative initiative, Seeding Success and its partners aim to improve K-12 student learning and outcomes through co-designing a system with a 2-Generation focus by building bridges between families, communities, and community organizations with Shelby County Schools.

- Agape Child and Family Services made gains in its poverty reduction goal, in that 7.84% of the families served are no longer living in financial poverty, which has exceeded their annual goal of reducing poverty by 1% annually for the next ten years.

Metrics

Educational Success:

- **86.3% parent participants are in an educational or training program to advance toward employment and career development.**
- **83.9% students increased their academic gains in core subject areas.**
- 78.4% increase in parental engagement in their children’s school and educational programming.

Health and Well-being:

- 40 families received services from Therapeutic Intervention, Education and Skills (TIES), which is a blend of the evidence-based Intensive Family Preservation Services (IFPS) program to address the complex needs of families with children at-risk of out-of-home placement due to parental substance use. As a result of these services, they prevented out-of-home placement or removal of the child(ren) from the home for 38 families.
- For Nurse Family Partnership program participants, **96.4% children are up to date with immunizations; reduction in preterm births; reduction in percentage of low weight births; 33.3% increase change in smoking status during pregnancy phase; and reduction in subsequent births.**
- **Gideon’s Army was able to reduce community violence and crime by 7% in the North Nashville Community.**

Workforce Development and Economic Stability

- 100 youth (ages 14-18) received paid internships and increased their job readiness skills through the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley Youth Force program.
- 430 families achieved their financial savings goal.
- **Prevented homelessness for 382 families. Provided housing assistance and diversion services to 323 families. 54% of the families were housed in 60 days or less**
- **63% adult program participants obtained/maintained employment.**
- 69.2% are enrolled in programs that lead to a credential or employment.

Social Capital

- Increase in awareness and utilization of community resources by 85.6%.
- Through the use of the full spectrum of mobile technology, families have been kept apprised of resources in the community. Expansion of social network opportunities (in-person and virtually).

Success Stories

Knowledge Quest (Shelby County): Cameron is a single mother of two children, four and fifteen years of age. She has been a participant in the Family Stability Initiative (FSI) since April 2010. One of the goals she set for her family was to obtain a well-paying job so she could increase income in her home and provide her family with their needs and wants. She applied for many jobs while working part-time hours in the community. Cameron did not have access to transportation, so she would walk miles to get to work and back home. Her lack of transportation also made it difficult for her to find more than a part-time job.

Later, Cameron was hired as a housekeeper at an apartment complex not far from her home, on a full-time basis. With the apartment complex being close to her home, Cameron was able to walk there. When asked during her sessions in the FSI program about her feelings of the progress she had made thus far, Cameron responded “I feel more independent and accomplished. I can see a better future for me and my family.” As Cameron continued to work for the apartment complex, she obtained a bike which she used as additional transportation twice a week. As another update in the program, she stated, “I feel more in control of my own life.”

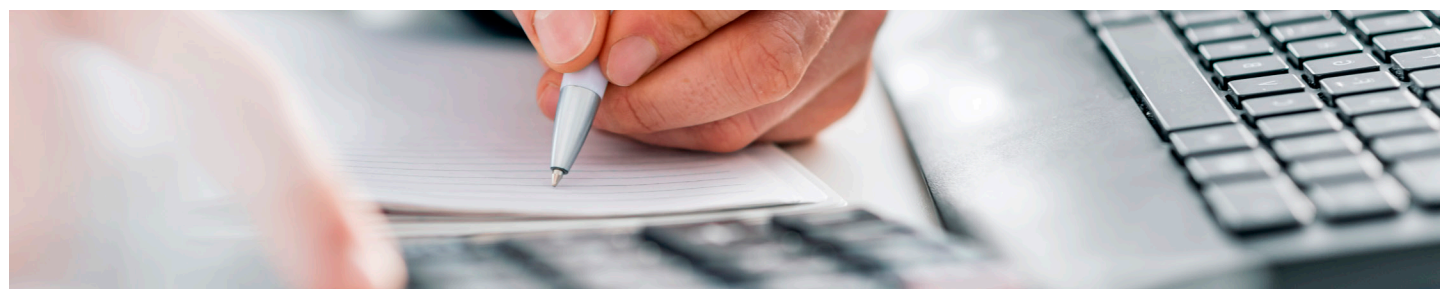
Cameron went on to encourage other families in the community to empower themselves by being a mentor for the University of Memphis. She helped other people in learning and creating goals to improve their lives. Inspired by her mother’s advocacy, her oldest child has been actively involved in the community by volunteering at community events. By viewing her mother as a role model, her eldest daughter wants to walk in her mother’s footsteps to empower other teens to be the change they want to see.

Throughout the program, Cameron is more aware of her natural leadership abilities. After making this discovery, she recognized she can have a very positive impact and in her own life by using her leadership qualities in a more constructive way.

Gideon’s Army (Davidson County): Ashley was homeless when the tornado and severe storms that struck Nashville destroyed her tent. She was sleeping in an abandoned hotel that still had lights (and no running water) but the storm knocked some of the wooden boards that covered her door away, revealing that she was staying there.

Gideon’s Army worked with Ashley, placing her in a hotel for two months while they worked to find temporary housing for her and her husband. Ashley lost her home in a house fire almost three years prior, and her family took on her children to help. Not having resources or support for herself, she ended up living on the streets and on drugs. She soon lost custody of her children and became estranged from her family.

Gideon’s Army helped Ashley to come off the streets; placed her in temporary housing; connected her with drug-rehab resources; helped secure her a job; and provided food and clothing resources for her and her children. Gideon’s Army also covered doctor visits and pays for medication if needed. If Ashley can show that she can stay drug-free and in a home for one year, she will be eligible to regain custody of her children. Currently, she has regular visitation with her children and her husband is also newly employed. Gideon’s Army is very connected to her entire family and will stay with her until and beyond the time she is reunited with her children.



WORKFORCE & Education

The Tennessee Department of Human Services places an intentional focus on workforce and education as it relates to programs, services and the success of people we serve. Several programs, such as Families First, SNAP, Child Care Payment Assistance and Vocational Rehabilitation have employment components. TDHS strives to more effectively connect our customers to the employment and educational resources that they need, which is the goal of our Workforce Council or WFC, Senior Policy Advisor and Employment and Education Coordinator.

The TDHS Senior Policy Advisor and Employment and Education Coordinator lead the Workforce Council (WFC), which is made up of representatives from each TDHS division with program knowledge regarding employment and education components. The WFC has been instrumental in promoting the One DHS culture by working in partnership with programs and services leadership and over 200 partners including, TDHS district/regional/divisional management teams, WIOA core partners, newly onboarded and current 2Gen and Employment & Case Management Service (ECMS) providers, business services unit employers, re-entry partners, and area Human Service organizations to collaborate on best practices for our customers.

Together, the group aims to ensure that all TDHS customers – regardless of the TDHS division to which they are connected – can access meaningful career pathways that also meet industry demands of the Tennessee economy and align to the Governor’s Office priorities

Key Accomplishments

- **Workforce Development, Re-entry, and Education (EWDR) Subcommittee & Tennessee Department of Corrections Partnership:** In SFY 2019/2020, the Workforce Council, Child Support and SNAP program representatives participated on the EWDR Subcommittee and worked to solidify our partnership with the Tennessee Department of Correction to develop recommendations and a proposal to address the state’s criminal justice challenges.
- **Hosted or participated in 48 Community Resource Fairs statewide:** Since 2017, the Employment and Education Coordinator has worked with employees in local TDHS field offices, American Job Centers, food banks, community partners and employers to host Employment, Education and Resource Fairs. The local events bring together potential employers, the American Job Centers mobile center, TDHS, state agency and community resources to citizens within their communities.
- **Hosted the first TDHS Virtual Employment, Education and Resource Fair:** In light of the COVID-19 emergency, the TDHS WFC organized a pilot Virtual Resource Fair (VRF) to connect Tennesseans to employment opportunities and respond to the urgent workforce needs of Tennessee businesses and the changing economy while connecting customers to meaningful education and employment opportunities. The TDHS Virtual Resource Fair took place on an online platform allowing customers to learn more about available resources and employment opportunities while practicing social distancing. TDHS partnered with the Tennessee Department of Labor Workforce and Development to identify industry priorities for the VRF as supported by the TN Talent Exchange.



- **Initiated DHS Works:** The Senior Policy Advisor and Employment and Education Coordinator are currently leading a process to develop a department-wide workforce strategy, ensuring extensive engagement of customers, divisions, the TDHS Workforce Council, others state agencies, the business community and other community partners. Called DHS Works, the workforce strategy development process includes surveys and strategy sessions that: identifies challenges, opportunities, and workforce solutions across all divisions; sets outcomes and metrics for success; supports implementation and continuous improvement.
- **Food Assistance to more than 600 families in Clay and Wayne Counties:** in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, the TDHS WFC, area TDHS staff, and other volunteers, provided food assistance to 600 families in Clay and Wayne counties in December 2019.
- **Participation in Tennessee Livability Collaborative:** in SFY 20, the TDHS WFC’s role expanded into representing the TDHS programs and services on the Tennessee Livability Collaborative (TLC) comprised of the State agencies listed below and associated partners and program leaders.
 - TN Department of Health
 - TN Department of Tourist Development
 - TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development
 - TN Department of Human Resources
 - Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD)
 - University of TN Extension – Institute of Agriculture
 - TN Department of Transportation
 - TN Department of Agriculture
 - TN Housing Development Agency
 - TN Department of Environment and Conservation
 - TN Department of Economic and Community Development
 - TN Department of Education
 - TN State Government – Customer Focused Government (CFG)
 - TN ARTS Commission
 - TN Department of Children’s Services
 - TN Higher Education Commission

BEHIND THE SCENES: DHS Support Divisions

TDHS has six divisions and offices which serve to enhance the function of direct services and supports innovation and efficiency in service delivery: Operations which includes Budget, Procurement/Facilities, Fiscal, Information Technology, the Division of Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions (QISS), and Division of Appeals and Hearings. Remaining support divisions include the Office of Inspector General, Office of General Counsel, Division of Human Resources, Talent Management – Learning & Development, and the Public Information and Legislative Office.



Operations Leadership

Tony Matthews
Deputy Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer

Barbara Broersma
Appeals and Hearings Assistant Commissioner

Wayne Glaus
Chief Information Officer of information and Technology

Krysta Krall
Chief Financial Officer of Fiscal Services

Stephen Reksten
Director of Procurement

Winfield Shier
Budget Director

Amanda Woody
Operations Director

Gary Wilson
Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions Assistant Commissioner

Operations

The departmental Operations area includes Appeals and Hearing, Budget, Fiscal, Information Technology, Procurement/Facilities, and Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions (QISS). QISS provides oversight and direction to the Department's data analysis efforts, continuous quality improvement, and quality assurance. Appeals and Hearings handles appeals for many of the programs administered by the Department, including eligibility for SNAP, Families First, Child Support, Vocational Rehabilitation cases, and disaster/pandemic benefits.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements

- The Business Transformation initiative was accelerated this fiscal year, as a result of disaster responses and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Enterprise System Modernization (ESM) portion of the overall transformation effort completed the procurement phase, and design and testing have begun. The business readiness, communication planning, and organizational change management pieces of the transformation have progressed, and the future-state has come into better focus. The transformation will deploy well-integrated systems to support TDHS customer-focused practices, such as coordination of services, self-service capabilities, and providing technology with a modern look, feel, and intuitive design.
- Over the past year the Division of Appeals and Hearings:
- Filed and processed appeals of 18,633 unique individuals consisting of 37,028 appealed issues
- Created and initiated a process for Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA) and P-EBT appeals in response to newly developed programs
 - 4,368 ECA appeals were received/heard as of September 2020
 - 2,238 PEBT appeals were received/heard as of September 2020

To process the very high volume of appeals which resulted from ECA and PEBT, the Division nearly doubled the amount of appeal processing required to maintain the required time frames for appeals.

Office of General Counsel

The Office of General Counsel (OGC) provides legal advice and legal representation in judicial and administrative litigation affecting all Department programs. Attorneys within OGC prepare Departmental rules affecting program implementation; assist in analyzing legislation affecting the Department; and assist in preparing legislation for the Department, among several other essential functions. OGC also oversees the legal function of the child support



Office of General Counsel Leadership

Krisann Hodges
General Counsel

Rebekah Parkhurst
Deputy General Counsel

Dezanne Russell
Deputy General Counsel

Jacqueline Griffin
Office Manager

Pennye Neal
Director

IV-D offices statewide. In addition to the legal role played by OGC, the Records Management Unit (RMU) is an important part of OGC. RMU provides records management support to the agency, assisting in the maintenance, storage and destruction of records.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements

- During state fiscal year 2019-2020, OGC partnered with program staff to successfully implement new Child Support Rules and guidelines which were effective in May 2020.
- OGC is partnering with both the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Child Care and Community Services to assist in their transformation and to provide any needed legal assistance necessary to complete the transformations.

Office of Inspector General

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) includes oversight of the Department's independent accountability functions. Those functions include internal audit, external program review, claims management and investigations. This office also investigates referrals of potential fraud, waste, and abuse and handles adjudication. OIG also partners with other state and federal agencies and law enforcement entities as necessary on investigations.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements

- The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) has increased the number of State Law Enforcement Bureau (SLEB) partners to twenty-seven agencies in SFY 2019-2020, and it continues to seek out new agencies to join in combating SNAP trafficking and fraud in the state of Tennessee.
 - The Department has partnered with various Federal & local agencies and recovered approximately \$10 million related to SLEB investigations.
- SIU has taken on all internal investigations, threat incidents, and special projects for the division since its inception. With several events impacting the state of



Office of Inspector General Leadership

Todd McKinney
Inspector General

Frank Houle
Director of Program Integrity

Sam Alzoubi
Director of Audit Services

Tennessee: Department of Human Services, SIU was instrumental in identifying and investigating fraud schemes in the Emergency Cash Assistance, Disaster SNAP, and other related programs both inside and outside the Department of Human Services purview.

- The Department has recovered over \$8 million in SNAP & TANF overpayments.
- For the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, the Audit Services Group conducted internal and external monitoring and/or auditing of 300 engagements. There were 112 internal audit reports and 188 external auditing / monitoring reports released.

Division of Human Resources, Talent Management – Learning & Development

In Human Resources, Talent Management, and Learning & Development (HR/TMLD), the guiding principle is that TDHS employees are the most important resource and make the mission possible. To that end, HR/TMLD manages all processes impacting the work-life cycle of a TDHS employee. This includes focused support driven by agency strategy to ensure that TDHS has the ability to attract, recruit, select, develop, engage and retain staff.

Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements

• Learning & Development:

- In SFY 2020, TDHS employees and contractors completed 47,529 unique learning sessions.
- In SFY 2020, TMLD facilitated 404 courses in a combination of traditional classrooms, virtual classrooms, and web-based formats. .



TMLD & HR Leadership

Abby Sparks
Assistant Commissioner

Delores Stokes
Director of Talent Management and Learning and Development

Darlene Stringfellow
Director of Human Resources

- In SFY 2020, TDHS employees and contractors completed 151,622 hours of learning, or an average of 29 hours of learning and professional development per employee.
- **Human Resources:**
 - In SFY 2020, HR hired and onboarded 402 new employees, and 376 existing employees received promotions.
- **Health & Wellness Council:** Prior to the pandemic, our Health & Wellness Council facilitated weekly wellness webinars for employees, with an average attendance of eight employees. Beginning March 18, 2020, as the pandemic began to impact Tennessee and our employees largely moved to a work from home format, we saw a large increase in attendance in these wellness webinars. From March 18, 2020 to August 5, 2020, an average of 45 employees attended each webinar. Based on the demand for ongoing employee wellness opportunities, the Health & Wellness Council added a weekly virtual yoga break (Mondays) and virtual meditation break (Fridays).



- **Alternative Workspace Solutions (AWS):** In 2016, TDHS began implementing Alternative Workspace Solutions (AWS). As of June 2019, 1,404 TDHS employees were participating in AWS, categorized as either “work from home” or “mobile” at least three days per week. This represented 38% of the total employee count (3,666) at that time. In response to COVID-19, TDHS increased the number of employees participating in AWS. As of June 2020, 2,953 TDHS employees are participating in AWS. This represents 80% of the total employee count (3,661) in June 2020.
- **Career Development Initiatives:** As a direct response to employee requests, the Department implemented a mentor program as an opportunity to assist employees in their career development. TMLD administered the Mentor TN program and provided numerous supports to both mentors and mentees (i.e. informational WebEx sessions, mentor and mentee orientation sessions). TDHS received 44 mentee applications and matched the requesting employees with 44 mentors.
- **Attraction, Recruitment, Selection and Retention of Talent:**
 - TMLD consulted hiring managers in the development of 106 executive and hard to fill supplemental job postings to accurately demonstrate and brand key job responsibilities.
 - TDHS has maintained an annualized turnover rate of 12.99%, which is 5.01% lower than the turnover rate of the TN Executive Branch average.

Public Information and Legislative Office

The Public Information and Legislative Office facilitates public, media, legislative, and customer requests. The communications team works to implement communications strategies that are supportive of the Department's mission and program needs. The office also focuses on legislative priorities for the Department, including the analysis of legislation affecting the Department, and representing the Department before the Tennessee General Assembly. Finally, the customer service team collaborates across program lines and directly with customers to ensure timely, thorough, and compassionate customer service.

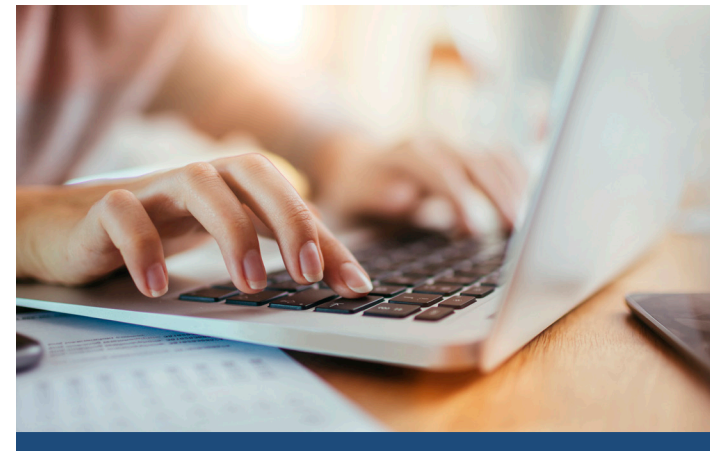
Key Accomplishments and Transformative Achievements:

Communications

- Produced video for various divisions; manage DHS websites both internal and external on a daily basis. Distributed press releases often to announce Department initiatives.
- Drastically increased the number of daily social media posts. That number has grown roughly 4 to 5 times. This change was primarily driven by a need to publicize new programs like P-EBT, Emergency Cash Assistance, and the Pandemic Child Care Payment Assistance Program. In addition, we started sending out press releases more frequently and have produced videos to publicize our programs.

Customer Service

- The Public Information and Legislative Office Customer Service Team has improved its inquiry management process, deploying enhancements to its Customer Service



PILO Leadership

Whitney Page
Chief of Staff

Suzanne Carr
Director of Legislation and Special Projects

Pamela Fusting
Director of Operations and Customer Experience

Devin Stone
Director of Communications

Management system that allow real time tracking and reporting on resolution timeliness based on the use of new, system-calculated due dates.

- The Customer Service Team also strengthened its Voice of the Customer (VOC) Program. In a move to incorporate Customer Experience Best Practices, a singular, weighted VOC Metric was developed to offer TDHS a better gauge of customer perception over time. The metric was developed using Customer Experience survey response data in the following key categories: Customer Satisfaction, Customer Effort, Communication/Outreach, Efficiency, and Empathy. In addition, to more efficiently close customer feedback loops and address concerns, additional fields for free-form comments and contact information were added to the Department's Customer Experience Survey.
- The Customer Service Team also played a key role in ensuring consistency of information across all channels – a task that was critical to the successful implementation of the Department's new

self-service tools this year (e.g., online applications, child support text messaging, the implementation of a new "virtual assistant" or chatbot to assist our customers online by offering answers to many of the common questions posed by those we serve, and a new hotline through which application status and updates were provided by phone).

Legislative

- TDHS successfully assisted with the passage of Public Chapter 622, which allows the Department to run a match with the Tennessee Lottery for prize winnings over \$5,000.00. This helps our Family Assistance team fight fraud, waste, and abuse in our SNAP program, and comply with federal requirements.
- The legislative team worked to educate members on legislation affecting the Department and worked with members to amend legislation, as needed. The legislative session was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic.



A Brief History

of the Development of the Department of Human Services

Tennessee has long been known as the “Volunteer State” for its willingness to step in when help is needed. Since its founding in 1796, state administrators have understood that we are stronger when our most vulnerable are supported.

For the first 31 years of the state’s life, the administration of “poor relief” was a responsibility of state counties and a court system that extended into the most remote sections of the state. In 1827, new legislation allowed counties to establish almshouses to provide for citizens who could not care for themselves due to disability or other factors. A century later in 1925, the Welfare Division was created under the state Department of Institutions to license child care institutions, maternity homes, jails, workhouses, and almshouses. The organization was also responsible for organizing county welfare committees.

The Great Depression saw a larger number of Americans in need of assistance and the state utilized a Federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan to assist Tennessee families. This support was continued through the 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Act that established the Tennessee State Relief Administration (TSRA), an organization that later transitioned to become the Tennessee Welfare Commission before morphing into the Department of Institutions and Public Welfare in 1937 and subsequently, the Department of Public Welfare in 1939.

In May 1975, the agency’s name again changed to the Department of Human Services (DHS). Over the next forty years, the department’s services grew to include child support programs in 1977, Rehabilitation Services in 1983 and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in 1996.

Today, the Department encompasses an extensive number of divisions all aimed a one purpose: building strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services.



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