Tennessee
Brighter Futures

Child Abuse Resources

About Child Abuse

Child abuse and neglect occur when a child under the age of 18 experiences abuse or neglect by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role (religious leader, coach, teacher) that results in current, potential or threat of harm to a child.

At least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse or neglect in the past year in the United States, but many cases are unreported. There are four types of child abuse: Physical, Sexual, Psychological and Neglect.

- Children in families with lower socioeconomic status are **5 times more likely** to experience abuse and neglect.
- Domestic violence is recognized as a leading cause of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).
    - Abusers target the head, neck, and face more than any other area of the body, which creates the potential for brain injuries.
    - Brain Injury must be considered when working with survivors. **15.5 MILLION children witness domestic violence per year.** Women often seek shelter *before* treatment for injury.
    - Consider that the parent/caregiver of a child involved with the Child Welfare System may have had a brain injury.

cdc.gov

Overlap with Brain Injury

Abusive head trauma remains the leading cause of death from physical abuse in children under 5, accounting for one-third of all child maltreatment fatalities (CDC 2024). Keep in mind that a parent or caregiver involved with the child welfare system may have sustained a brain injury. It is unknown how many parents and children involved in the system have brain injuries. Cognitive changes after a brain injury can make parenting and complying with the rules and appointments of the child welfare system more challenging. Parents with brain injuries may struggle more with parenting, having lower frustration tolerance, being quick to anger, exhibiting increased impulsivity, and making poorer judgments. Children with brain injuries may find it harder to conform and adapt to placements. Children and adolescents with TBIs are at increased risk of mental health issues, academic struggles, and social challenges well into adulthood and should therefore be monitored for difficulties over time.

Parents and children should be screened for prior history of brain injury and any cognitive or functional changes. Accommodations should be provided and reinforced frequently to ensure their learning and use. Parents and children should be educated about their injury and what can be done to help alleviate it. Families should be referred to services or symptom specialists in the community for additional help when needed.

Overlap continued:

Children from early childhood through adolescence and young adulthood, especially, should be monitored over time for challenges with academics, cognition, physical ability, mental health and behavior. Their medical and academic charts should contain a designated form to indicate their history of brain injury, including concussion, so the knowledge is not lost when they transition from one teacher to another or one school to another, including transitions from early childhood settings. See Concussion/TBI Alert and Monitoring Form. The research showing differences in children with and without brain injury several years later highlights the importance of this tracking.

Screening Tools

Ohio State University TBI Identification Method screening tool for Brain Injury

HELPS Brain Injury Screening Tool

Crisis Intervention Tools

To Report Child Abuse or Neglect, call the Child Abuse Hotline: 877-237-0004
Reports also can be made online on our secure site.
Child Abuse and Tracking direct link https://apps.tn.gov/carat/

Department of Childrens Services website https://www.tn.gov/dcs.html

How to Report Child Abuse
https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-safety/reporting/child-abuse.html

Reporting Abuse FAQ and Training
https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-safety/reporting/faqs.html

National Resources

Brain Injury and Child Welfare Best Practice Guide: Information and Tools for State Agencies

State Resources

Brain Links' Free Toolkits for **Survivors, Families and Caregivers**, for **School Nurses**, for **Service Professionals**, and for **Healthcare Providers**

Concussion and Brain Injury in Students: Who Needs to Know customizable to include any state's resources.

Brain Links' resources for the person with the injury, caregivers and families
https://www.tndisability.org/have-injury Many good resources, including Signs and Symptoms tools, When Concussion Symptoms are Not Going Away, and more.

Brain Links' resources for Teachers and School Nurses https://www.tndisability.org/school-professionals

Brain Links' resources for Professionals

- Abuse and Trauma
- Other professionals

Darkness to Light End Child Sexual Abuse
"Darkness to Light empowers adults to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse through awareness, education, and the reduction of stigma."

Child Advocacy Centers in Tennessee A children's advocacy center is the ONE place that provides a safe, child-friendly environment where law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical and mental health professionals may share information and develop effective, coordinated strategies sensitive to the needs of each unique case and child. Find a local CAC: cactn.org

Centers of Excellence for Children in State Custody "focused on improving comprehensive well-being of children in or at risk of state custody. Centers of Excellence assist in providing science-based guidance to improve children's health, behavioral outcomes, and improve systems serving children by providing clinical consultations, evaluations, and limited direct services to children with complex needs. There are five locations across the state to serve children in or at risk of state custody."
https://www.tn.gov/tenncare/tenncare-kids/centers-of-excellence.html

TN Voices "TN Voices utilizes evidence-based practices and approaches to promote social-emotional competence in young children. TNV collaborates with families to provide training, support, and resources to strengthen the family unit." https://tnvoices.org/children/

> **Team TN mission** "Team Tennessee, using the Pyramid Model framework, facilitates public-private collaborations to strengthen the social-emotional development of all infants and young children." https://tnvoices.org/teamtn/

TN Commission on Children and Youth "The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) is an independent, nonpartisan agency created to ensure the state's policies and programs effectively promote and protect the health, well-being and development of children and youth.
Established by the Tennessee General Assembly as a permanent commission, TCCY is the state's centralized informational resource and advocacy agency for timely, fact-based information to aid policymaking and coordination of resources." https://www.tn.gov/tccy.html

> **TCCY's data dashboard** FUTURE, provides Tennessee County Profiles of Child Well-Being that offers valuable insights into the well-being of children & youth in communities across the state.

Resilient TN Collaborative "Fosters connections to promote positive childhood experiences for infants, children and youth across all communities in TN."

Community Health Access and Navigation in TN (CHANT) "CHANT is an integrated model of care coordination provided through the local health departments. The program provides enhanced patient-centered engagement, assistance with navigating complex systems, and care coordination of medical and social service needs. Families and individuals are connected to available resources which may include reimbursement for medical services and assistance with co-pays, deductibles, and co-insurance for children and youth with physical disabilities." https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/chant/about-chant.html

Individuals eligible for CHANT include:

- Pregnant and postpartum adolescents and women
- Children (Birth - 21 years)
- Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (Birth - 21 years)

Model Programs

Handle with Care "Handle with Care" provides the school or childcare agency with a "heads up" when a child has been identified at the scene of a traumatic event. It could be a meth lab explosion, a domestic violence situation, a shooting in the neighborhood, witnessing a malicious wounding, a drug raid at the home, etc. Police are trained to identify children at the scene, find out where they go to school or daycare and send the school/agency a confidential email or fax that simply says . . . "Handle Johnny with care". That's it. No other details. https://tnhandlewithcare.org/

Partners in Care Program a collaboration between the Metro Nashville Police Department, Mental Health Cooperative, and other metro government agencies created to better serve individuals in the community who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The Partners in Care program strives to improve access to care for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis, divert consumers from the criminal justice system and into the health care system, all while improving the communication and coordination across all systems of care, and increasing the safety of all involved in these crisis interactions. https://www.nashville.gov/departments/police/investigative-services/major-crimes/alternative-policing-strategies/partners-care

Infographics & Factsheets

Brain Links' materials

Brain Injury and Child Abuse Infographic

Brain Injury and Domestic Violence Infographic

Brain Injury and ACEs Infographic

Resilience and the Brain Infographic

Brain Health: How to Have a Healthy Brain Throughout Life

5 Types of Concussion with 2 Modifying Factors

Concussions ARE Treatable

Department of Childrens Services Download an information poster with the hotline number you can display in your school, business, or church. Spanish version: Information Poster

Infographics - Building Strong Brains TN - What are ACEs?
https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/resilienttn/aces/ACEs-Handout.pdf

Trainings

- Department of Children's Services: including Reporting Abuse FAQ & Training
- Clients Rights Handbook
- Child Abuse Coordinator Training & Resources
- Tennessee Voices Trainings (Mental Health First Aid, Parenting, Advocacy and more)

Steward of Children training **"Darkness to Light's flagship training, *Stewards of Children*®,"** teaches adults practical actions they can take to reduce instances of child sexual abuse in their organizations, families, and communities. Through interviews with a very diverse group of people with lived experience, experts, and treatment providers, *Stewards of Children*® is one of the only award-winning, evidence-informed, adult-focused child sexual abuse prevention trainings in the United States proven to increase knowledge and change behavior." https://www.d2l.org/training-catalog/stewards-of-children/

Support

KidCentralTN A one-stop shop for Tennessee families with links to valuable support programs, including basic needs, child support, life skills and more. https://www.kidcentraltn.com/support.html

TN Brighter Futures groups that are a part of this System of Care

Tennessee Early Intervention System

Dept. of Childrens Services

UTK Social Work Office of Research & Public Services

Tennessee Voices

Children's Advocacy Center of Tennessee

TN Dept. of Health CHANT Program

Giles County Early Interventionist

ETSU Center for Excellence for Children in State Custody

Carl Perkins Center

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