



Tennessee Early Childhood Care & Education Needs & Opportunities Assessment

Current State Landscaping Analysis

Tennessee Department of Education | March 2023



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Introduction

Tennessee has long recognized the importance of early childhood care and education (ECCE) that children receive prior to school entry. Access to high-quality early teaching and learning contributes to the Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE) goal that all children become successful readers by third grade, and moreover, better prepares children to thrive in kindergarten and into the future.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services explains that early childhood experiences, particularly the first five years of life, impact long-term social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development.¹ Research into short-term effects of early learning shows that children who attend high-quality early learning programs are more likely to take honors classes and are less likely to repeat a grade².

ECCE services serve an important purpose for parents as well as children. In addition to the peace of mind that comes from confidence in their child's wellbeing, parents rely on ECCE to give them time to work and develop their careers. Accessible, affordable, reliable, and high-quality ECCE can be a key enabler of the Tennessee workforce and an important part of the state's economic infrastructure.

Purpose

In securing the Federal Preschool Development Birth through 5 Grant (PDG B-5), TDOE aims to gain a holistic understanding of the system of ECCE in Tennessee today. This Landscape Analysis is a systematic and comprehensive examination of the current state of ECCE and is a foundational input into the state's ECCE Needs & Opportunities Assessment. The goal of this work is to provide insights on ECCE supply and demand within Tennessee that will inform the development of a strategic plan aimed at supporting policymakers, programs, and other stakeholders to build a more effective and equitable ECCE system that meets the needs of children and families across the state. The following Landscape Analysis provides a detailed

¹ US Dept. of Health & Human Services. (n.d.). Early childhood development and education. Early Childhood Development and Education - Healthy People 2030. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/early-childhood-development-and-education#cit2>

² Gormley, W. T., Phillips, D., & Anderson, S. (2017). The effects of Tulsa's Pre-K Program on middle school student performance. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 37(1), 63–87. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22023>

assessment of the system of ECCE in Tennessee across five key areas: Governance, Demographics & Scale, ECCE Workforce, Accessibility & Capacity, and Quality.

This Landscape Analysis is one component of the Needs & Opportunities Assessment, which is compiled in this document, plus includes a set of key insights contained within a microsite. This Landscape Analysis describes the current state of the Tennessee ECCE system by drawing from existing secondary research and data sources. The insights in the microsite contain broader analysis and insights on systematic challenges, specific needs within the Tennessee ecosystem, and opportunities to improve ECCE for parents and children. Insights in the microsite draw from this landscape analysis and from primary research with families, industry experts, and the ECCE workforce.

Additionally, in 2023, Public Chapter 340 passed by the Tennessee General Assembly required the TDOE to conduct a statewide needs analysis of preschool education in Tennessee. This report outlines the findings below.

Our Process

TDOE leveraged human-centered design methods to understand the needs and opportunities for families within the complete preschool system in Tennessee. Design thinking methodology is defined as:

“A non-linear, iterative process that teams use to understand users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions to prototype and test.”³

We define the Tennessee ECCE system as all organizations, agencies, actors, and stakeholders that receive ECCE, are involved in its delivery, or govern its rules and structures. A full system diagram is showcased in the Needs & Opportunities Assessment microsite.

We understand that a complex system exists that requires engaging and balancing the needs of diverse stakeholders, therefore we used a systems approach to arrive at strategies that consider all actors in Tennessee’s ECCE landscape. A systems approach is defined as: *“An approach that designers use to analyze problems in an appropriate context. By looking beyond*

³ Interaction Design Foundation. (2022, July 12). What is design thinking?. The Interaction Design Foundation. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/design-thinking>

*apparent problems to consider a system as a whole, designers can expose root causes and avoid merely treating symptoms. They can then tackle deeper problems and be more likely to find effective solutions.*⁴

Through robust stakeholder engagement, we have developed an understanding of:

- Wants and needs of Tennessee's families for high-quality ECCE.
- Family motivation behind participation in 0-5 ECCE services: Why they choose or choose to not participate and what barriers may exist
- How, and to what extent ECCE services enable or hinder the Tennessee workforce.
- Challenges that ECCE programs face in quality delivery.

Additional detail on our stakeholder engagement activities can be found in the microsite.

Our process is overall divided into four phases:

1. Discover: Understand all ECCE options in Tennessee and uncover the wants and unmet needs of families with children ages 0-5.
2. Describe: Identify and prioritize needs across Tennessee's ECCE system. Identify high-impact gap and opportunity areas for enhanced ECCE that gives families the ability to achieve their employment goals with the trust that their children's care and education needs are met.
3. Design: Co-create a vision and strategic plan for addressing family needs by enhancing the ECCE experience in Tennessee.
4. Iterate: Create directives for ensuring productive Tennessee Preschool Commission meetings and integration of outcomes into the final strategic plan as appropriate

The Discover and Describe phases are the most significant inputs from which the Needs & Opportunities Assessment and Landscape Analysis were created. A full breakdown of interviewees included in our primary research can be found in the microsite. This Landscape

⁴ Interaction Design Foundation. (2022, July 12). What is design thinking?. The Interaction Design Foundation. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/design-thinking>

Analysis represents a summary of our qualitative and quantitative secondary research which includes:

- A comprehensive review of existing literature, reports, studies, and articles addressing ECCE in Tennessee and in other geographies
- Analysis of existing data sources on Tennessee’s population and ECCE programs

Definitions of Key Terms

Term	Definition
ECCE	Early Child Care and Education- an all-encompassing term for the industry that cares for and educates children 0-5 not yet in kindergarten
Preschool age children	Children that are ages 0-4 and turn 5 after August 15 of a given year ⁵
PDG B-5	Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five
TDOE	Tennessee Department of Education
TDHS	Tennessee Department of Human Services
Vulnerable children	For the purposes of this report, ‘vulnerable children’ are defined as those under 5 living below the federal poverty line, and/or have a disability, and/or have limited English language proficiency.
Rural	Districts were categorized as rural, suburban, or urban by analyzing student enrollment data from the National Center for Education Statistics, which relies on the U.S. Census Bureau geographic entity codes. Counties were given a

⁵ Calculated using US Census 2021: Total of children ages 0-4 + 38% of children age 5 (number of children ages 0-4 divided by 5) to represent the estimated number of 5-year-olds whose birthdays are after August 15

	designation based on the area where most students attended school in the 2021-2022 school year.
Children under 5	Any child from birth through age 4. This measure is used when available data correspond to this age grouping.
Children under 6	Any child from birth through age 5. This measure is used when available data correspond to this age grouping.
ECCE Workforce	Any teacher, administrator or other individual involved in the provision of ECCE services for children ages 0-5
ECCE Educators	Any teacher or other instructor providing ECCE to children ages 0-5

Governance

In the state of Tennessee, successful delivery of quality early care and education is the responsibility of many government agencies, corporations, non-profits, and community organizations across the state. Additionally, it is important to note that efforts to provide ECCE extend far beyond developing centers and preschools. Together, the many organizations that take part in ECCE delivery and oversight across Tennessee provide a variety of services including, but not limited to funding, creation and enhancement of ECCE programs, training and support for the ECCE workforce, consultation and resource allocation for vulnerable families, specialized care for children with disabilities, and political advocacy and awareness campaigns about the importance of ECCE.

A full diagram of the ECCE ecosystem in Tennessee can be found on the Needs and Opportunities Assessment microsite.

A Decentralized System.

Tennessee's Early Care and Education system is decentralized, with many agencies and organizations playing pivotal roles at all levels of execution. In many cases, local districts, community organizations, and individuals determine when, where, and how to provide ECCE services throughout the state. While this decentralized style of governance has benefits (e.g., enabling high levels of collaboration and sense of autonomy), it also presents challenges. For example, decentralized governance can lead to inconsistencies in capacity, quality, and terminology across programs.

As a result, ECCE holds a variety of meanings to families, programs, and government employees in Tennessee. Therefore, having a holistic understanding of the ECCE system, how it operates, and the key players involved is essential to properly addressing the needs of the state.

Involved Government Agencies

At a high level, the Tennessee Governor and many government agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction are responsible for developing and managing the ECCE system that includes a variety of birth-to-5 services. The responsibilities of these agencies include implementing legislation, providing funding for the development of new programs and initiatives, facilitating

coordination between federal agencies and local service programs, monitoring and regulating state programs, ensuring the licensure and training of the ECCE workforce, and developing overarching strategies for the future of ECCE across the state.

This section provides a brief overview of the most involved government agencies and their role in supporting the ECCE workforce. Details about the programs, funding mechanisms, and additional resources provided by these government agencies are further discussed in the Quality and Accessibility Sections below.

Tennessee Department of Education

The Tennessee Department of Education’s strategic vision is to create “policies, programs, and practices” that enable “Tennessee’s districts and schools to make targeted interventions, create innovative programs, and permit a safe, healthy learning environment for teachers and students.”⁶ While the department is primarily responsible for the funding and development of educational programs for all children for Pre-K through 12th grade, TDOE also oversees many school or privately-administered ECCE programs.

TDOE is responsible for certifying a variety of ECCE programs, providing federal and state funding to programs including Voluntary Pre-K, Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, Charter Schools, and private schools licensing and employing educators, and providing additional resources low-income, vulnerable children with special needs and their families.

In 2022, estimates from the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth show that TDOE spent approximately \$194,633,270 or 6.9% of its total expenditures to provide services for approximately 992,041 children under 5 years.⁷ The table below describes specific ECCE services that TDOE administers.

⁶ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). Dept. of Education. <https://www.tn.gov/education.html>

⁷ Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. (April, 2022). *Resource Map of Expenditures for Tennessee Children and Youth*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/rm/ResourceMapping_2022.pdf

Service Type	TDOE ECCE Services
Program Funding and Resources	Title 1 State Voluntary Pre-K Funds Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 619, Part B Head Start PDG
ECCE Workforce Training & Development	Aside from teacher licensure, additional training and professional development for ECCE Workforce is provided at the district level.
ECCE Programs ⁸ TDOE Certified childcare programs	Voluntary Pre-K Early Childhood Special Education LEA fee-based and blended preschools Lottery Education Afterschool Programs (LEAP) 21 st Century Community Learning Center (21 st CCLC) District-Run Head Start Private School 0-5 and/or school-age care

⁸ (Feb, 2024). *Rules of the State Board of Education Chapter 0520-12-01: Standards For School Administered Childcare Programs.*
<https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/rules/0520/0520-12/0520-12-01.20240225.pdf>

Tennessee Department of Human Services

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) strives to “build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education, and support services.” TDHS provides a wide range of services to Tennesseans of all age levels, including financial aid and support, employment resources, access to nutrition and medical resources, general information and consultations, and care for children, elderly, and people with disabilities.

TDHS Role in ECCE. TDHS provides a wide variety of services to families with children ages 0-5 discussed in this document. TDHS is responsible for the grant funding and licensure for all childcare centers, drop-in-centers, family childcare homes, and group homes. Additionally, TDHS implements the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in nearly all TDHS license programs to maintain a certain level of program quality in Tennessee. Finally, the department provides financial aid and resources to help families become self-sufficient.

In 2022, an annual report from the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth estimated that TDHS spent \$829,518,706, or 40% of its total expenditures on services for approximately 269,664 children under 5 years old.⁹ Of all the government agencies, TDHS is allocated the most money to spend on children under 5 and, as a result, expends the highest dollar amount of across the agencies.

⁹ Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. (April, 2022). *Resource Map of Expenditures for Tennessee Children and Youth*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/rm/ResourceMapping_2022.pdf

Service Type	TDHS ECCE Services
ECCE Funding Mechanisms	Childcare Development Fund (CCDF) WAGE\$ Childcare Enhancement Grants (One-Time) Childcare Establishment and Expansion Grants (One-Time) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Stabilization Grants (COVID Relief Funds, not ongoing)
ECCE Workforce Training & Development	Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL) TrainTN Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA) Family Childcare Network (TFCCN)
Additional Resources	Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Pre-Licensure Unit
Licensed Childcare Programs	Childcare Centers Drop-In-Centers Family Childcare Homes Group Homes

	Non-District-Run Head Start Programs
Family Financial Aid and Resources	<p>Financial Aid:</p> <p>Childcare Payment Assistance - Smart Steps</p> <p>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) - Families First</p> <p>Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)</p> <p>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>The Center for Childcare Resources and Referrals</p>

Tennessee Department of Health

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is “to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee.”¹⁰ The department’s operations cover a wide range of services including care for mental health issues, rehabilitation for substance abuse, hospitals, crisis services, and licensure.

TDH Role in ECCE. While many of TDH’s services are available to children under 5, this research primarily analyzes programs, such as Evidence Based Home Visiting, which focus on helping at-risk and low-income families with young children. These services are designed to ensure healthy development of children 0-5 by educating families and connecting them to additional resources provided by the state.

¹⁰ Tennessee State Government. (n.d). Dept. of Human Services. <https://www.tn.gov/health.html>

In 2022, estimates from the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth show that TDH spent approximately \$109,654,367 or 51.6% of its total expenditures to provide services for approximately 77,081 children under 5 years.¹¹

Service Type	TDH ECCE Services
Program Funding and Resources	Primary Sources of Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) • 2Gen • The Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MEICHV) • Healthy Start • Nurse Home Visitor
Licensed Childcare Programs	Evidence Based Home Visiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Families America (HFA) • Parents as Teachers (PAT) • Nurse-Family Partnerships (NFP) • Research Based Home Visiting • CHANT

Tennessee Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

The Tennessee Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (TDIDD) aims to “support all Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live the lives they envision for themselves.” The department provides many state and community level programs to all eligible people with disabilities and their families across the state.¹²

¹¹ Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. (April, 2022). *Resource Map of Expenditures for Tennessee Children and Youth*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/rm/ResourceMapping_2022.pdf

¹² Tennessee State Government. (n.d). Dept. of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities. <https://www.tn.gov/didd/about.html>

The primary service provided by TDIDD is the Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS), which helps children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families develop and execute specialized plans to meet their individual needs.

In 2022, estimates from the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth show that TDIDD spent approximately \$49,359,682 or 89.60% of its total expenditures to provide services for approximately 9,395 children under 5 years.¹³ Of all government agencies, the TDIDD allocates the highest percentage of its overall funds to children under 5.

Service Type	TDIDD ECCE Services
Program Funding and Resources	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C
Programs for Children 0-5	Tennessee Early Intervention Services (TEIS) <i>Individual support inside existing programs</i>

Additional agencies will be mentioned throughout this document, however, the above are the most prominent within the ECCE ecosystem.

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY)

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) seeks to “lead systems improvement for all children and families through data-driven advocacy, education, and collaboration.”¹⁴ The agency collaborates with child- and family-serving organizations across Tennessee to improve the resources for and lives of children and their families.

Additionally, TCCY collaborates with the Annie E. Casey Foundation on a data collection effort called Kids Count. Together TCCY and Kids Count collect and publish county-level data on the

¹³ Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. (April, 2022). *Resource Map of Expenditures for Tennessee Children and Youth*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/rm/ResourceMapping_2022.pdf

¹⁴ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. <https://www.tn.gov/tccy.html>

children of Tennessee in an annual report titled *Kids Count: The State of the Child in Tennessee*.¹⁵ This report, along with many other data tools, is used to provide state legislators and child advocates with reliable data and necessary resources to inform policies for children and their families.

The Tennessee Young Child Wellness Council (TNYCWC) is a branch of TCCY that convenes early childhood experts from across the state to promote systematic changes for children from before birth to 9 years old. TNYCWC was formed in 2013 and includes members from state agencies, private care programs, advocates, and families from around the state. Additionally, the council serves as the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council. TNYCWC provides infant and early childhood agencies and community stakeholders the opportunity to share expertise and develop strategies around common goals.

Funding by Agency

The annual report from the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth estimated that Tennessee agencies spent a total of approximately \$1,943,609,032 on children under 5. However, data regarding expenditures for this age group in Tennessee remains limited. Of all age groups, government spending on children ages 0-5 is the least understood and, as a result, the numbers below should be treated as estimates.

Despite existing limitations, the data below points to some interesting findings. While children under five account for 27% of all Tennessee children, the estimated total spending for children in this age group was only 14.6% of all expenditures on Tennessee children. However, it should be noted that this number increased from 13.9% in 2021.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Annie E. Casey Center. Kids Count Data Center. <https://datacenter.aecf.org/>

¹⁶ Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. (April, 2022). *Resource Map of Expenditures for Tennessee Children and Youth*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/rm/ResourceMapping_2022.pdf

Estimated Expenditures by State Agency for Children Under 5				
State Agency	Est. \$ Spent on Children Under 5	Est. % Spent on Children Under 5	Est. Total Expenditures	Est. Children Under 5 Served
Department of Human Services	\$829,518,706	40.6%	\$2,044,018,027	269,664
TennCare	\$535,898,580	26.7%	\$2,007,110,787	580,474
Department of Education	\$194,633,270	6.9%	\$2,834,938,069	992,041
Department of Children's Services	\$190,513,099	21.8%	\$873,239,790	77,081
Department of Health	\$109,654,367	51.6%	\$212,424,997	4,966,055
Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	\$49,359,682	89.6%	\$55,076,575	9,395
CoverKids	\$20,756,908	14.3%	\$145,662,512	15,094
Administrative Office of the Courts	\$4,884,924	26.8%	\$18,202,517	3,965
Governor's Early Literacy Foundation	\$3,787,511	45.3%	\$8,365,246	417,034

Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	\$2,965,191	4.6%	\$64,185,211	820
Volunteer TN	\$1,464,433	7.7%	\$19,065,656	2,847
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth	\$79,734	1.5%	\$5,150,964	487
Tennessee State Museum	\$73,353	25.0%	\$293,462	8,550
Department of Environment and Conservation	\$19,273	10.0%	\$192,732	140,000

Demographics & Scale

Tennessee's children aged 0-5 live across all 95 counties in rural, urban and suburban areas. They come from many racial/ethnic groups and have a variety of backgrounds and family situations. The section below outlines various demographic information about this population in Tennessee. Data in this section comes primarily from the American Community Survey's 5-year Estimates for 2021.

Characteristics of Tennessee's 0-5 Population

Demographics & Location

In 2021, there were 405,867 children, 207,621 males and 198,246 females, age 0-4 in Tennessee.¹⁷ There are an estimated 437,00 (*rounded*) preschool age children, which includes the children ages 0-4 plus an estimated number of children who turned 5 after August 15th, 2021, Tennessee's cutoff for kindergarten eligibility.¹⁸

The largest racial group for kids under 5 is White-only (68%), followed by Black-only (18%), Multiracial (8%), Other-only (4%), and Asian-only (2%). Less than 1% of Tennessee's children under five are American Indian-only (0.44%) or Pacific Islander-only (0.14%).¹⁹ ²⁰ The Hispanic population comprises 11% of Tennessee's under 5 children.

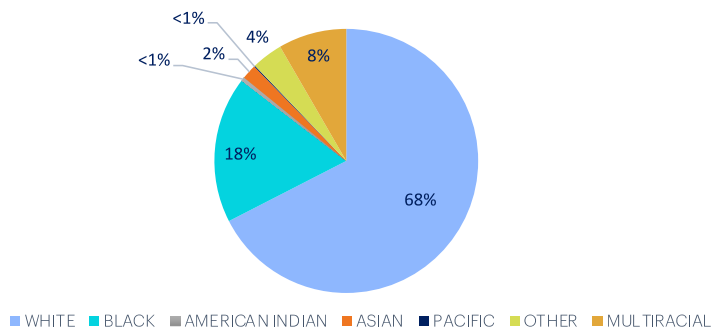
¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates. Retrieved from table S0101.

¹⁸ Calculated using US Census 2021: Total of children ages 0-4 + 38% of children age 5 (number of children ages 0-4 divided by 5) to represent the estimated number of 5-year-olds whose birthdays are after August 15

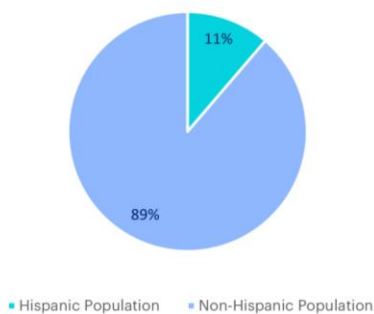
¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates. Retrieved from tables B01001A, B01001B, B01001C, B01001D, B01001E, B01001F, B01001G.

²⁰ For more information on how the American Community Survey collects data on race, see <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/race/>

Tennessee Population Under 5 Racial Demographics

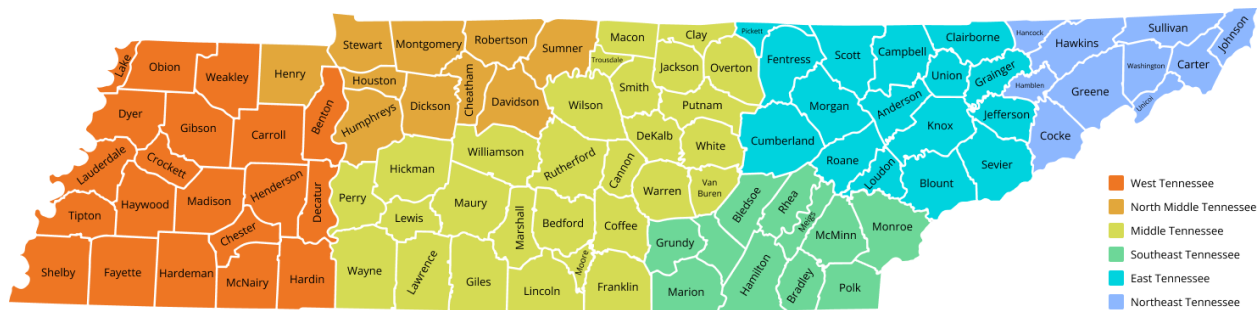


Tennessee Hispanic Population Under 5



Defining Communities

Map of Tennessee's Six Regions

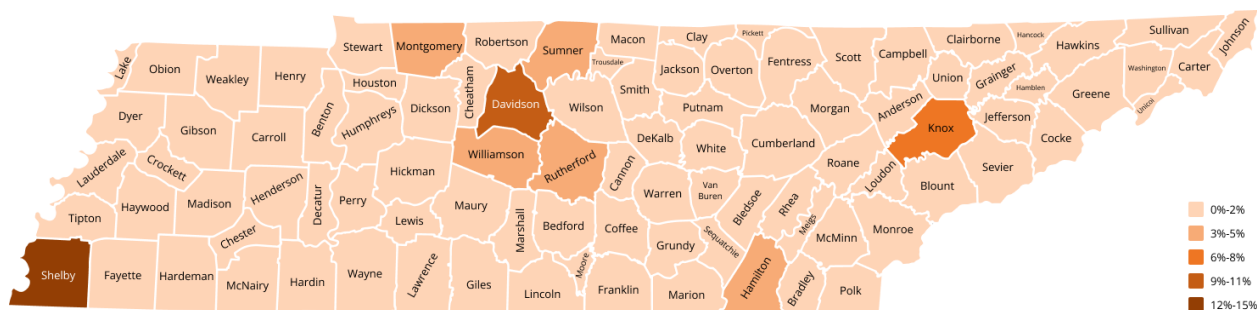


Tennessee has 6 regions identified on the map above. Of the 95 counties across the state, 73 are primarily rural, 10 are primarily suburban, and 12 are primarily urban. For the purposes of this analysis, counties were given a primarily rural, suburban, and urban designation based on the type of area where most students in the districts contained within the counties attended school in the 2021-2022 school year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.²¹ A school's 'area' is determined by U.S. Census Bureau geographic entity code from the National Center for Education Statistics. That said, some counties have a mixture of rural, suburban, and urban areas.

In Tennessee, children under 5 are either in 10 highly concentrated suburban and urban areas or spread out across various primarily rural counties. The highest number of Tennessee's children under 5 live in the following 10 primarily suburban or urban counties: Shelby, Davidson, Knox, Rutherford, Hamilton, Montgomery, Williamson, Sumner, Wilson, and Sullivan. Those 10 counties alone are home to 59% of the state's population under 5.

The fewest number of Tennessee's children under 5 live in the following primarily rural counties: Pickett, Clay, Van Buren, Lake, Moore, Hancock, Houston, Jackson, Bledsoe, and Perry. These 10 counties are home to less than 1% of the state's population under 5.

County Concentration of Children Under 5 by Percent of Tennessee's Total Children Under 5²²



²¹ U.S. Dept. of Education. (n.d). *School locations & geo-assignments*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Geographic/SchoolLocations>

²² See Appendix A: County Heat Map Data for the data used to populate heat maps.

Who are the Vulnerable Children in Tennessee?

For the purposes of this analysis, ‘vulnerable children’ are defined as those under 5 living below the federal poverty line, and/or have a disability, and/or have limited English language proficiency.

Children Under 5 Living in Poverty

Child poverty has been on the decline in Tennessee since 2011—between 2011 and 2021, the percentage of the total population under 17 living in poverty dropped from 26.3% to 18.1%.²³ On a national level and in Tennessee, poverty amongst children under 5 is higher than all children aged 0-17, meaning the younger the child, the more likely they are to be considered in poverty.

In 2021, of the 405,867 Tennessee children under 5, 88,155 lived below the federal poverty line.^{24 25} In other words, approximately one in every five children under 5 lives in poverty.

- The Tennessee counties with the highest percentages—all 35% or over—of the population under age 5 living in poverty are: Hancock, Sequatchie, Lake, Haywood, Wayne, Cocke, DeKalb, Johnson, Lewis, and Claiborne.
- The Tennessee counties with the lowest percentage—all 13% or less—of the population under 5 living in poverty: Williamson, Moore, Wilson, Hickman, Van Buren, Trousdale, Dickson, Henderson, Humphreys, and Blount.

Children under 5 living in poverty are not concentrated in a few counties but spread out in communities, mostly rural, across the state. For the purposes of this report, ‘high poverty

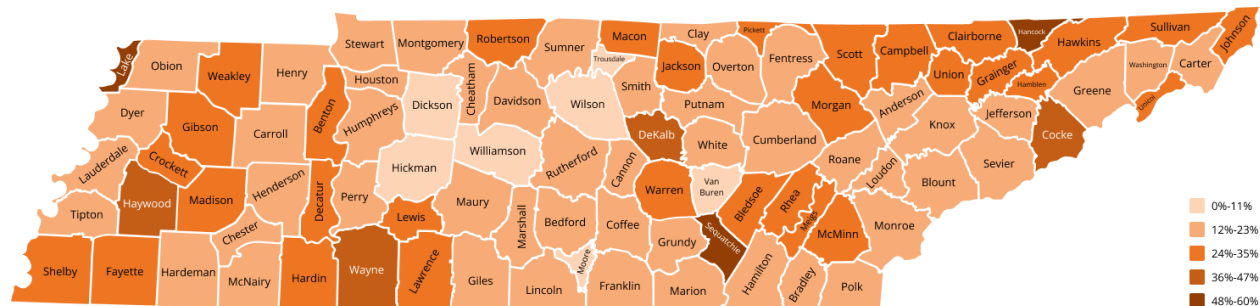
²³ (n.d.). *Kids Count State of the Child 2022*. Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/StateoftheChild2022.pdf>

²⁴ The federal poverty line (FPL) is determined by a household’s modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) along with the number of people in the household.

²⁵ U.S Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*.

counties' are defined as counties where the percentage of children under 5 living below the federal poverty line is above 21.72%, which is the Tennessee's average poverty rate for children under 5. The Tennessee average poverty rate for children under 5, 21.72%, is greater than the national average, which is 15.5%.²⁶ 'Low poverty counties' are defined as counties where the percentage of children under 5 living below the federal poverty line is below 21.72%. Using this definition, out of Tennessee's 95 counties, 48 can be considered high poverty and 47 can be considered low poverty.

County Map of Concentration of Children Under 5 Below Federal Poverty Line by Percent²⁷



Of the 405,867 Tennessee children under 5, 32%, or 132,054, are children of color, meaning they were reported as being a race other than 'White-only'. Across Tennessee, children of color under 5 are more likely to live in high poverty counties than children under 5 who are white. 35% (96,086) of children under 5 who are white live in high poverty counties while 48% (63,069) of children of color under 5 live in high poverty counties. Black children under 5 are more likely to live in high poverty counties (58%) than low poverty counties (42%).²⁸

²⁶ (2021, Jan. 12). *The Basic Facts About Children in Poverty*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/basic-facts-children-poverty/>

²⁷ See Appendix A: County Heat Map Data for the data used to populate heat maps.

²⁸ Calculations derived from using American Community Survey data five-year estimates Retrieved from tables B01001A, B01001B, B01001C, B01001D, B01001E, B01001F, B01001G and B17001.

Children 3-5 with Disabilities

In Tennessee, there are 8,960 children ages 3-5 not yet in kindergarten receiving IDEA B special education services through the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE).²⁹ Children must qualify through TDOE to receive these services, at which point they receive an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that detail the child's unique learning goals. The most common disability, impacting 42% of the 8,960 children with disabilities, is a developmental delay. The second most common is a speech/language impairment (37.7%), followed by autism (15.5%). Most Tennessee children with IEPs are age 4 (47%), followed by age 3 (33%), then age 5- not yet in kindergarten (20%). Children receiving IEPs are 2.4 times more likely to be boys.

Category ³⁰		Total Count
	All Students	8960
Disability	Autism	1387
	Deaf/Blindness	*
	Developmental Delay	3816
	Emotional Disturbance	*
	Hearing Impairment	99
	Intellectual Disability	*

²⁹ The 8,960 children referenced here does not include Tennessee children under 3 with disabilities who receive IDEA Part C services through Tennessee Education Intervention Services (TEIS). It also does not include children who may have disabilities but have not qualified for either an Individualized Learning Plan (IEP) through TNDOE s or an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) through TEIS.

³⁰ (2022). *TNDOE IDEA Child Count 2021-2022*. Tennessee Dept. of Education.

	Multiple Disabilities	81
	Orthopedic Impairment	50
	Other Health Impairment	106
	Specific Learning Disability	*
	Speech/Language Impairment	3381
	Traumatic Brain Injury	14
	Visual Impairment	18
Race	Asian	193
	Black	1485
	Hispanic ³¹	963
	Native American	16
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	12
	White	5960
	Two or more races	331
Age	3	2980
	4	4184

³¹ In this report, if a child was reported as Hispanic, they were not asked to provide a race identification. 'Two or more races' refers to children who are two races and not Hispanic.

	5 (not Kindergarten)	1796
Gender	Female	2633
	Male	6327

*Data are suppressed for counts of less than 10

Children with Limited English Proficiency

The American Community Survey data does not include data on English proficiency under age 5. However, there is data on English proficiency for ages 5-17 that provides a relevant picture as to where these children may be. In Tennessee, one in every ten children ages 5 to 17 live in a home where English is not the primary language spoken.^{32 33} The U.S. Census Bureau differentiates children ages 5-17 who live in non-English speaking households by whether they speak English 'very well' or 'less than very well.' In this report, children ages 5-17 who live in non-English speaking homes and speak English 'very well' are referred to as bilingual. Conversely, children in non-English speaking homes who speak English 'less than very well' are referred to in this report as having 'limited English proficiency' and are considered a subset of the vulnerable children identified.³⁴

The counties with the highest percentages of children ages 5-17 with limited English proficiency in non-English speaking homes are: Clay (100.00%), Smith (80.00%), Cannon (71.57%), White (70.21%), Henderson (69.77%), Cumberland (63.01%), Johnson (62.35%), Overton (59.34%).

³² (n.d.). *Kids Count State of the Child 2022*. Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/StateoftheChild2022.pdf>

³³ The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey counts each non-English language spoken at home. In this report, the non-English speaking homes includes all non-English languages.

³⁴ The American Community Survey does not provide data on children under 5 in non-English speaking households. However, it is reasonable to believe that in areas where children aged 5-17 have limited English proficiency, there are children under 5 with similar or lower levels of English proficiency.

Immigrant population

In Tennessee, 10,810 children under 5 were born outside the U.S, which amounts to 2.6% of the under 5 population.³⁵ Of those children, 3,102 live in high poverty counties and 7,708 live in low poverty counties. A child under 5 who was born outside the U.S. is 2.5 times more likely to live in a county with low poverty rates than a county with high poverty rates.

The counties with the highest percentages of children under 5 born outside the U.S. are: Trousdale (32%), McNairy (25%), Crockett (21%), Lake (16%), Blount (11%), Madison (8%), Monroe (7%), Claiborne (7%), White, and McMinn (6%).

Characteristics of Tennessee's Rural Areas

- Most children under 5 live in urban counties, followed by rural, then suburban counties.
- By a small margin, rural counties have the lowest number of 3–4-year-olds, 16,704, enrolled in nursery or preschool. Rural counties also have the lowest nursery or preschool enrollment percentage (13%) compared to suburban and urban communities.³⁶
- The number of children living under the poverty line is nearly the same in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

³⁵ U.S Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*.

³⁶ U.S Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*.

Community Type	# of Children Under 5	3-4-Year-Olds in Nursey or Preschool	# of Children under 5 below poverty line	White population under 5	Black population under 5	Multiracial population under 5 ³⁷	Hispanic Population Under 5
Rural	125,448	16,704	29,196	102,285	9,354	8,884	10,214
Suburban	107,478	18,205	28,118	54,281	37,849	6,755	12,089
Urban	172,941	27,923	30,841	117,247	25,761	18,298	23,570

Efforts to Improve Rural Economies. In 2019, 15 Tennessee counties, all rural, were identified as 'distressed' by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), which prepares an annual index of county economic status across Appalachian United States.³⁸ Counties designated 'distressed' by ARC "rank among the 10 percent most economically distressed counties in the nation."³⁹ The Tennessee Governor's first executive order in 2019 was to promote accelerated transformation of these distressed, Appalachian rural counties.⁴⁰ Between 2019 and 2021, those counties

³⁷ This table focuses on the racial groups with the largest percentages in the state.

³⁸ ARC only includes Appalachian counties in their analysis, and most of eastern Tennessee is not considered Appalachian by their definition. So although there were 15 designated "distressed" counties as defined by ARC, there are likely additional non-Appalachian, economically distressed counties not captured in that definition.

³⁹ Appalachian Regional Commission. (n.d). *Distressed Designation and County Economic Status Classification System*. Appalachian Regional Commission. <https://www.arc.gov/distressed-designation-and-county-economic-status-classification-system>

⁴⁰ (2019, January 23). *Gov. Bill Lee Issues First Executive Order to Address Accelerated Transformation of Rural Area*. Office of the Governor. <https://www.tn.gov/governor/news/2019/1/23/gov--bill-lee-issues-first-executive-order-to-address-accelerated-transformation-of-rural-areas.html>

experienced significant declines in child poverty, and between 2019 and 2021, child poverty rates declined in 58% of all Tennessee counties.⁴¹

School Enrollment Among Children Ages 3-4

Of the estimated 165,808 children aged 3-4 in Tennessee, 62% are not enrolled in school, including preschool or nursery school.^{42 43} Low school attendance for children this age is prevalent across counties, regardless of that county's poverty rates.

- There are only seven Tennessee counties where more than half the children ages 3 and 4 are enrolled in school.
- In seven additional counties, less than 20% of children ages 3 and 4 are enrolled in school.

3-4-year-olds are least likely to attend preschool if they are from rural areas and most likely to attend if they are from suburban areas. Additionally, more 3-4-year-olds attend public schools (58%), than private schools (42%).⁴⁴

⁴¹ (n.d.). Kids Count State of the Child 2022. Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/StateoftheChild2022.pdf>

⁴² U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*.

⁴³ There are many types of preschools in Tennessee that families may define as being different from a nursery and preschool. In those cases, it is possible that children who attend preschool programs that parents define differently than nursery or preschool may not be represented here.

⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from Table S1401.

Work & Employment Characteristics of Families with Kids 0-5 in Tennessee

General Characteristics. There are 287,063 total families in Tennessee with children under the age of 6.⁴⁵ Of these families...

- One in every four have a female head of household.
- Two in every three have married members.
- One in every five live in poverty.

Of those families with children under 6, the most common household type is a two-parent household in which both parents work (37%), followed by a one-parent households in which that parent works (28%) and two-parent households in which only one parent works (25%).^{46 47} Given that, 65% of families with children under 6 have all available parents in the workforce.

Whether or not a household has a single or dual source of income is not always predictive of whether that family lives in poverty (see Appendix A for a full employment status breakdown for families with children under 6). Having a single source of income is only correlated with poverty where there is a single parent household, but not when there is a two-parent household. A family with two parents in the labor force has double the chances of living in a county with low poverty than a county with high poverty. The same is true for households with two parents where only one parent works. However, families with one parent who works have nearly an equal chance of living in high poverty versus low poverty counties.⁴⁸

Family Incomes

The median family gross household income in Tennessee is \$74K (rounded) for non-married households and \$89K (rounded) for married households.⁴⁹ Nearly a third of families in Tennessee with children under age 6 have gross annual incomes below \$50K. While some of

⁴⁵ U.S Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from Table S1702.

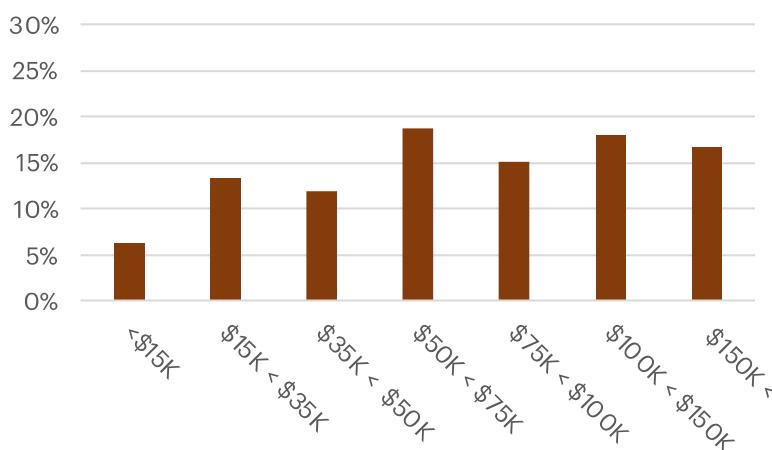
⁴⁶ U.S Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from Table B23008.

⁴⁷ The two least common household types that make up less than 10% of the total families with children under 6 are: households with two parents where neither works and households with one parent who does not work.

⁴⁸ See Appendix A for full table. Source: U.S Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*.

these families qualify for no-cost programs like Head Start or Voluntary Pre-K with the Tennessee Department of Education or subsidized programs with the Tennessee Department of Human Services, many do not.⁴⁹ The table below shows the distribution of gross incomes for families with children under age 6.

Gross annual incomes for families with children under 6⁵⁰



ECCE costs are not only a significant portion of many family budgets, but issues related to ECCE have also contributed to employment disruptions for 80% of Tennessee working parents. Parents reported the following disruptions because of inadequate ECCE:⁵¹

- 26% were fired or quit
- 30% experienced reduced hours from full-time to part-time or were unable to increase hours from part-time to full-time
- 32% said no to a job offer or promotion
- 20% left the workforce entirely

⁴⁹ Head Start and Voluntary Pre-K use the same income requirements to determine eligibility, which is 185% of the federal poverty line. The federal poverty line is different depending on the number of members in a household.

⁵⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*.

⁵¹ (2022, December). *The Economics of Tennessee's Childcare Crisis*. Tennesseans for Quality Early Education. <https://tqee.org/app/uploads/2022/12/2022-TQEE-Child-Care-Study.pdf>

These employment disruptions generated \$1.65 billion in economic losses for working parents in 2022 alone.⁵²

Data Gaps & Limitations

Census. The most robust data we have about children and infants in Tennessee comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). ACS data is collected each month from a sample of addresses across America, including Tennessee. The data estimates used in much of this report were 5-year-estimates which represents data collected over a five-year period, which increases the statistical reliability of estimates, especially for less populated areas. This data source is especially helpful for providing data organized by county, which aids in analyzing geographic pockets of high poverty across the state.

There are limitations, however, when it comes to using Census data. Census questionnaires are typically completed by the head of each household who responds based on their own understanding of the terms in each question. For example, there may be variability in how respondents define "public" or "private" school, and because the census does not offer a definition, whether the respondent selects "public" or "private" is left up to their own understanding and experience.⁵³

Districts

Districts do not consistently report the same type of data to the state. When districts experience data entry errors, it becomes difficult to aggregate the data accurately across the state.

⁵² (2022, December). *The Economics of Tennessee's Childcare Crisis*. Tennesseans for Quality Early Education. <https://tqee.org/app/uploads/2022/12/2022-TQEE-Child-Care-Study.pdf>

⁵³ For more information about how the Census asks certain questions, see a copy of the questionnaire- <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/>

Defining Terms

The consistency with which data scientists define their terms can mean the difference between enhanced understanding or confusion about the preschool-age population in Tennessee. Across data sets, the variables 'race' and 'ethnicity' are sometimes conflated, with the term "Hispanic" counting as a racial group as opposed to an ethnic group. This means children who are reported as Black or White, for example, but who are also Hispanic, may not have the opportunity to select, and therefore be counted in, both their racial and ethnic group.

State data sources detailing children receiving SPED services sometimes include 5-year-olds not yet in kindergarten in what Tennessee considers the P4 population. Sometimes, 5-year-olds not yet in kindergarten are not included at all data sets with preschool aged children. This creates difficulties in understanding the full picture of which children are receiving special education sources, for example. For accurate analysis, it is important to check how data sources are defining and operationalizing each variable.

Disabilities

The U.S. Census Bureau only reports auditory and visual disabilities, which does not offer a comprehensive picture of the children under 5 with special needs in Tennessee. The clearest picture of children 3-5 with disabilities in Tennessee comes from the IDEA Part B data which counts the number of children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Still, that leaves out children 0-3 who may have disabilities and children 3-5 with disabilities who haven't qualified for IEP services.

Rural Counties

Counties in Tennessee are not reported as rural, suburban, or urban designation in any data sources. However, school districts located within counties are classified by whether they serve rural, suburban, or urban student populations. For the purposes of this report, we designated counties based off the type of area—cities, towns, rural—where most children attend school. However, this means that even in counties that are designated 'primarily suburban,' for example, there can be large rural areas.

Early Childhood Care & Education Workforce

Teachers and administrators are the backbone of the early childhood education ecosystem. They allow the system to function and are responsible for implementing any mandated approach or initiative. In Tennessee, the ECCE workforce has a variety of supports and challenges.

The ECCE Workforce Profile

Size. The table below provides a breakdown of US Bureau of Labor Statistics employment estimates for various occupation classifications relevant to ECCE⁵⁴:

Occupation Title	Occupation Classification Definition	Employment Count in Tennessee 2022
Preschool Teacher (excluding Special Education Teachers)	"Instruct preschool-aged students, following curricula or lesson plans, in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth."	6,070
Childcare Worker	"Attend to children at schools, businesses, private households, and childcare institutions. Perform a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play."	10,010
Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	"Plan, direct, or coordinate academic or nonacademic activities of preschools or childcare centers and programs, including before- and after-school care."	450

⁵⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/>

This population is predominantly comprised of women.⁵⁵

Qualifications

A full profile of teacher and administrator education and experience levels across all types of ECCE is not available, however requirements for various positions give an indication of the backgrounds likely to be found in these roles:

	Lead Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Director
Pre-K	BA (Bachelor's of Arts) minimum, early childhood endorsement and licensed.	CDA (Child Development Associate) or equivalent required unless recruitment deemed difficult, then HS diploma and experience acceptable	BA minimum
Childcare Centers	High School or equivalent, no BA minimum	No CDA or equivalent minimum	BA minimum
Home based care	High School or equivalent, no BA minimum	No High school or CDA or equivalent minimum	High school diploma

Expected qualifications across ECCE settings:^{56 57}

⁵⁵ Center for the Study of Childcare Employment. (n.d.). State Profiles: Tennessee. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/tennessee/>

⁵⁶ (2020). (rep.). The State of Preschool 2019. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/YB2019_Full_Report.pdf

⁵⁷ Center for the Study of Childcare Employment. (n.d.). State Profiles: Tennessee. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/06/Appendix-Table-3.1_2020-Index.pdf

TDOE collects information on educational qualifications of teachers in its VPK program, shown below for the 2021-2022 school year:

	BA	Doctorate	EdS	Masters	HS	Associates	CDA
Teachers	56%	.8%	6%	37%	-	-	-
Assistants	19%	.1%	-	2%	39%	18%	21%

Of this population, 98% had their Tennessee teaching License and 2% had a Waiver. A licensed teacher in Tennessee can teach Pre-K on a one-year waiver while seeking early childhood endorsement.

Socioeconomic Status. By all measures, the ECCE workforce has limited earning potential. Making up approximately 57% of expenditures for ECCE programs, worker salaries are the largest influencing factor in economic viability of ECCE programs and affordability for parents.

ECCE worker salary also greatly contributes to program quality (versus other expense categories like facility rent, educational supplies and professional development).⁵⁸ The US Bureau of Labor Statistics lists the following salary data for Tennessee:

Position	Median Hourly Wage	Median Yearly Wage
Childcare worker	\$12.10	\$25,160
Preschool teacher	\$16.32	\$33,940
Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	\$28.60	\$59,490

⁵⁸ The University of Tennessee & Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (2022). (rep.). Cost of Quality Care Study. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Cost%20of%20Quality%20Care%20Final%20Report.pdf>

The Tennessee state profile notes that salary for early educators is around 24% lower than that of K-8 teachers with similar levels of educational attainment. Indeed, the poverty rate for early educators in Tennessee is over 10 percentage points higher than the average Tennessee worker (23 vs 11%) and 10 times as high as the poverty rate for teachers in Tennessee as a whole (2.3 percent).⁵⁹ Wages for childcare workers are less than the yearly wage of occupations like telemarketer and parking attendant⁶⁰. Nationwide, Black educators were most likely to work in settings with lower wages, at 39% versus 27% of White educators and 26% of Hispanic educators.⁶¹

The Childcare WAGE\$. This TDHS program aims to supplement early educator salaries, reduce turnover and reward educators for higher education attainment. Depending on how many early childhood college credits an educator has completed, WAGE\$ direct deposits an annual award, issued in two parts, directly to the educator. Supplements are dependent on the educator staying employed at their current facility. To date this program has supported 2,693 educators in 835 childcare centers.⁶² Only TDHS licensed programs are eligible for this program.

Training Requirements & Resources for the ECCE Workforce

ECCE educators have different training requirements depending on their teaching license status and the oversight body of their program (TDHS or TDOE). ECCE educators in TDOE-oversight programs are required to fulfill the same state-mandated Professional Development Points (PDPs) as all teachers in K-12 schools. Additionally, TDOE licensed teachers must complete 60 PDPs over the validity period of the license to renew a teaching license.⁶³ ECCE educators with

⁵⁹ Center for the Study of Childcare Employment. (n.d.). State Profiles: Tennessee. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/06/Appendix-Table-3.1_2020-Index.pdf

⁶⁰ (2022, December). *The Economics of Tennessee's Childcare Crisis*. Tennesseans for Quality Early Education. <https://tqee.org/app/uploads/2022/12/2022-TQEE-Child-Care-Study.pdf>

⁶¹ Zhang, X. Z., Khanani, N., Parker, C., & Caven, M. (n.d.). (rep.). Center- and Program-Level Factors Associated with Turnover in the Early Childhood Education Workforce. Institute of Education Sciences. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/northeast/Publication/50193>

⁶² Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (2020). Childcare WAGE\$® Tennessee. <https://tnwages.org/>

⁶³ Tennessee Dept. of Education. (n.d.). *FAQ for educators*. <https://www.tn.gov/education/educators/licensing/licensing-faq/pdp-faq-for-educators.html>

TDHS-oversight programs must have 3-12 hours of annual training depending on the program type.⁶⁴

There are a variety of programs available to ECCE professionals and business owners in Tennessee. These programs and services are made possible through state and local government and non-governmental organizations. They fall in two general categories: support for training/professional development of early childhood educators, and support for ECCE program organizations.

Educator Training and Professional Development

Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL). TNPAL is a free resource that serves as the system of record for qualifications, training, and professional development for ECCE educators in TDHS-licensed facilities. The system also supports verification of credentials for ECCE programs. Users create a profile with which they can store training information and create a professional development plan. TNPAL links directly to other organizations that provide ECCE training.

At the close of 2022, users had completed over 280,000 hours of trainings in the system, with the most popular topics being Leadership & Professionalism; Healthy, Safety, & Nutrition; and Child Development & Learning.⁶⁵

TrainTN.

A companion to TNPAL, this service trains ECCE staff to meet the Tennessee Licensure Rules for Childcare Agencies and the Childcare and Development Block Grant professional development requirements. TrainTN training records integrate with TNPAL, and TDHS only recognizes external or non-agency-based training sources approved through TrainTN.⁶⁶ Only TDHS licensed programs are eligible for this program.

⁶⁴ Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (n.d.). *Rules of the Tennessee Department of Human Services Division of Child ...*
<https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/rules/1240/1240-04/1240-04-01.20220629.pdf>

⁶⁵ Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (2022). (rep.). Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning Annual Report January-December 2022.
<https://www.tnpal.org/api/file/s/summary-report>

⁶⁶ Tennessee Dept of Human Services. (2022, April 21). TrainTN. <https://traintn.sworpswebapp.sworps.utk.edu/>

Tech Goes Home Tennessee (Early Childcare Agencies & Educators)

This TDHS-approved training course teaches ECCE educators foundational technology skills in support of their career. It also includes small business-related technology skill building. ECCE programs may be eligible to receive devices for their programs upon completion of the training.⁶⁷ Only TDHS licensed programs are eligible for this program.

Association for Infant Mental Health in Tennessee (AIMHiTN). The Association for Infant Mental Health in Tennessee is a non-profit organization that supports professionals who provide services for the development of children from birth to six years of age. The organization offers professional development training and accreditations to ECCE workers, fosters policies and best practices to improve the lives of infants and their families, and raises awareness about the importance of ECCE across the state.

Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R)

This service offers free training, technical assistance, and coaching for ECCE educators and professionals as well as resources for parents, employers, and the community that support high quality care and child development. There are nine Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R) sites across Tennessee serving all 95 counties that also provide support to ECCE programs under TDHS. CCR&R coaches provide technical assistance, training, coaches, and resources on a variety of ECCE topics from inclusion to Tennessee Early Learning Development Standards to classroom management.⁶⁸

Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA)

This statewide service provides affordable professional development for TDHS ECCE staff, funded through TDHS. It offers tuition and academic support for students completing Early Childhood Career and Technical Education programs. TECTA and Tennessee State University also offer the Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credential (TECPAC), Tennessee Infant-Toddler Credential, specialized orientation courses, and a high school equivalency program.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Tech Goes Home TN. (2022). About TGH TN. <https://techgoeshometn.org/index.php/about/>

⁶⁸ TN Childcare Resource & Referral Network. (n.d). <https://tnccrr.org/>

⁶⁹ Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance. (2023). <https://tecta.info/about/>

Family Childcare Network (TFCCN)

This organization offers free training, technical assistance and mentoring for ECCE professionals from TDHS-licensed programs.⁷⁰

Reading 360

This TDOE- sponsored program offers literacy training for Pre-K-3rd grade teachers through free resources and training to districts. Teachers have access to professional development to prepare them to support reading and learning, as well as kits for use in the classroom and stipends for additional training. Courses are delivered online through TDOE's Best for All Central site and in-person.

District-Offered Professional Development

ECCE teachers with TDOE certified programs may take advantage of the professional development offerings of their school district. Many TDOE-oversight programs may also offer their own professional development to their staff.

Business Management Support

Childcare Tennessee. This program supports collaborative opportunities across ECCE program administrative, programmatic, and operational services. It serves as a central hub for policies, forms, regulations, guidance, and discounts and serves TDHS-licensed programs. It also seeks to facilitate partnerships between ECCE programs and local and national businesses for improved quality and cost savings.

Family Childcare Network (TFCCN). This organization offers free training, technical assistance and mentoring for ECCE professionals from DHS-licensed programs.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Tennessee Family Childcare Network. (2022, October 7). <https://tfccn.org/>

⁷¹ Tennessee Family Childcare Network. (2022, October 7). <https://tfccn.org/>

Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R)

This program offers small business academies to help DHS-licensed ECCE programs develop sound business and operational practices. The academies cover topics such as budgeting, financial reporting, marketing and recruitment.

Childcare Enhancement Grants

These grants are available to TDHS-licensed ECCE agencies to increase capacity, strengthen quality, or help ensure compliance with licensing standards. This program offers additional incentives for ECCE programs that operate in economically distressed counties to complete an infant and toddler training specialization or seek to remediate deficiencies.⁷²

Establishment and Enhancement Grants

This grant program, through TDHS with American Rescue Plan Act funding, supports costs associated with opening new ECCE facilities or expanding existing facilities.

Impact of COVID-19

The Cost of Quality Care Study (2021) surveyed 300 ECCE programs and summarized the immense impact of COVID-19 on Tennessee's ECCE programs. Over half of programs experienced a decrease in revenue, as well as an increase in operating costs, creating great financial difficulty. Nationally, the pandemic drove the closure of 10% of locally-owned ECCE programs, while programs run by major franchises increased by 3% between September 2019 and April 2021.⁷³

Tennessee ECCE programs similarly reported financial hardship as a significant theme of their experience during the pandemic.⁷⁴ The Center for American Progress estimated that 44% of licensed ECCE slots were at risk of disappearing.⁷⁵ While many Tennessee programs received federal financial assistance during this time (the main sources being DHS Disaster Relief and federal Payroll Protection Plan funding), it is important also to note that higher rated programs-

⁷² Childcare Tennessee, An Initiative of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. (2023). <https://www.childcaretennessee.com/>

⁷³ Phil Vaccaro. (2022) *Early Childhood Education Market Trends and Outlook*. Ernst & Young Parthenon.

⁷⁴ Smith, K. (n.d.). (publication). *The Impact of Covid-19 on the Early Childhood Community*. Tennessee State University. <https://www.tnstate.edu/learningsciences/documents/White%20Paper%20-%20The%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20the%20ECE%20Community.pdf>.

⁷⁵ (2020, July 31). *By the numbers: Covid-19's impact on childcare*. Childcare Relief. <https://childcarerelief.org/states/tennessee/>

-as indicated by the QRIS STAR rating system--received nearly double the amount of funding versus.⁷⁶

ECCE Workforce Pipeline and Future Outlook

In national trends post-pandemic, there remain 88,000 fewer ECCE jobs than existed at the end of 2019, yet staff retention rate has dropped from 80% to 65%. Out of 199 U.S. programs polled in an Ernst & Young study, 10% of ECCE programs report being under-enrolled due to lack of teachers. Many centers also report a decline in the quality of teacher applications. At the same time, demand for and early childhood learning is expected to rise as return-to-office pressure grows post-Covid.⁷⁷

Educator turnover remains a challenge for ECCE programs. According to a 2012 study from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, average turnover was as high as 16% for private ECCE programs. The highest turnover rates were found with programs serving children ages 0-5 versus programs in the 3-5 age range. Low salary was the strongest predictor of increased turnover.⁷⁸

Successful Models in Tennessee

In response to similar workforce challenges among K-12 teachers, TDOE established a program to develop and retain teachers in their local communities. After a successful pilot, the Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship program was established as a sustainable model. Candidates earn on-the-job learning hours with a path to hire and individualized coaching, making it easier to earn required credentials without a bachelor's degree. While this program currently focuses on the K-12 workforce, it may serve as a model for the ECCE workforce.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ The University of Tennessee & Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (May, 2022). (rep.). Cost of Quality Care Study. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Cost%20of%20Quality%20Care%20Final%20Report.pdf>

⁷⁷ Phil Vaccaro. *Early childhood education market trends and outlook*. Ernst & Young. (2022-2023).

⁷⁸ Zhang, X. Z., Khanani, N., Parker, C., & Caven, M. (n.d.). (rep.). *Center- and Program-Level Factors Associated with Turnover in the Early Childhood Education Workforce*. Institute of Education Sciences. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/northeast/Publication/50193>.

⁷⁹ Tennessee State Government. (n.d). *Grow Your Own*. Tennessee Dept. of Education. <https://www.tn.gov/education/grow-your-own.html>

Data Gaps & Limitations

The following are gaps in existing data that limit the understanding of the ECCE workforce:

- Data on ECCE educator credentials and years of experience across all programs is not available that would give insight on programs that are able to meet or exceed credential requirements
- Data on salaries paid to ECCE workforce members would give a more nuanced view of workforce experiences across program types
- Similarly, hiring and turnover rates as well as vacancy information would give a more detailed picture of the market for the ECCE workforce in Tennessee

Accessibility & Capacity

Tennessee's mixed delivery ECCE system offers a range of resources for connecting families to programs and supporting affordability. Across Tennessee a variety of choices exist to fill family and child needs. However, accessibility challenges exist in areas with low ECCE capacity and for many families who struggle to afford fee-based programs.

Defining ECCE Accessibility

ECCE accessibility refers to the ease with which families can locate, afford, enroll their child in an arrangement that both supports children's development and meets the parents' needs, regardless of their income, race, ethnicity, language, or ability status.

In 2020, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), in collaboration with researchers and policy makers, identified four key factors to ECCE accessibility: *Reasonable Effort, Affordability, Supporting Children's Development, Meeting Parent's Needs*.⁸⁰ This report leverages the OPRE definition to analyze the accessibility of ECCE programs in the state of Tennessee.

⁸⁰ Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. *Conceptualizing and Measuring Access to Early Care and Education, 2020*.

Key Factors of ECCE Accessibility as Defined by OPRE	
Key Factors	Definition
Reasonable Effort	There must be sufficient availability of age-appropriate ECCE slots near parents' homes or workplaces, and information about those ECCE options must be readily available.
Affordability	Affordability reflects a broad definition of cost, including cost to parents, subsidies or financial assistance, and costs incurred by ECCE programs for providing services.
Supporting Children's Development	ECCE should <i>support the child's development</i> , (i.e., be high quality and meet children's developmental needs)
Meeting Parent Needs	Families should be able to obtain care that <i>meets the parents' needs</i> across a variety of factors, including parental preferences for specific program types or features or the need for extended care, care during non-traditional hours, or care for multiple children.

Current Program Offerings

Tennessee offers a variety of state licensed and certified ECCE program types for children ages 0-5. All programs are either certified by the Tennessee Department of Education or licensed by the Tennessee Department of Human Services depending on the program type and offerings.

TDOE Certification

DOE certified programs are operated by either the state, a school district, or a private organization and must be housed in conjunction with a K-12 school.

TDHS Licensure

TDHS licensed programs are privately operated child care programs and can be independently owned, franchised, or affiliated with an organization, such as a church or corporation.

	Tennessee Department of Human Services	Tennessee Department of Education
Regulatory Status	"Licensure"	"Certification"
Program Types	<p>Childcare Centers</p> <p>Drop-in-Centers</p> <p>Family Group Homes</p> <p>Group Childcare Homes</p> <p>Head Start (Non-District Operated)</p>	<p>Voluntary Pre-K</p> <p>Private Preschools</p> <p>Special Education Services</p> <p>Head Start (District Operated)</p> <p>Title 1</p> <p>Fee-based</p> <p>Lottery Education Afterschool Programs (LEAP)</p> <p>21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC)</p>
Program Funding Sources	<p>Parents & Families</p> <p>Childcare and Development Fund</p> <p>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</p>	<p>Parents & Families</p> <p>Title 1</p> <p>Voluntary Pre-K Funds</p> <p>IDEA 619</p>

Below is a table depicting the number of programs and capacity by program type and regulatory agency. Data is taken from the 2022-23 list of all regulated birth-5 ECCE programs and school-age aftercare options for families in Tennessee.⁸¹

Regulatory Agency & Program Type	Number of Programs	Total Seats Available (includes seats for ages 0-18)
TDOE Licensing	1,849	169,375
TDHS Licensing	2,349	174,335
TOTAL	4,198	324,610

Despite the differences in these programs, which will be discussed below, together they make up Tennessee's robust ecosystem for ECCE.

Tennessee Department of Education Certified Programs

TDOE certifies a variety of state, federally, and privately funded programs that aim to provide quality teaching and learning to families with children ages 0-5. Given the academic nature of these programs, they are curriculum-based programs provided in public schools, private schools, faith-based, and community organizations.

Programs certified by the Department of Education are required to adhere to the *Standards for School Administered Childcare Programs* as well as all state and applicable federal laws.⁸²

Below is a table that contains information about TDOE Licensed programs. The data below is from the TDOE.

⁸¹ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *Tennessee Childcare Agency Website List Readme File Information*. Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Agency%20Website%20List%20README%202-15-18.pdf>

⁸² THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER. (n.d.). CHAPTER 0520-12-01 Standards for School Administered Childcare Programs.

Program	Programs		Enrollment		Funding	
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023
Voluntary Pre-K ⁸³	925 Classrooms (18,500 seats)	944 Classrooms (18,880 seats)	16,634 Students (15,349 income-eligible students)	17,837 students (16,671 income eligible students)	\$110,793,070 (\$86,029,013 State Funding)	\$110,793,070 (\$86,029,013 State Funding)
Head Start and Early Head Start	371 Head Start Centers and LEA's	371 Head Start Centers and LEA's	Head Start: 14,097 Early Head Start: 2,383 Migrant and Seasonal: 225	Head Start: 14,182 Early Head Start: 2,352 Migrant and Seasonal: 225	\$182,106,785 in Federal Funding	\$184,484,622 in Federal Funding
Special Education The Early & Intervention System (TEIS)	450 IDEA 619 Classrooms	500-550 IDEA 619 Classrooms	8,971 Young children with IEP's 16,789 TEIS Children	12,849 Young children with IEP's 17,225 TIES Children (expected)	\$7,667,623 in federal IDEA, Part B funding	\$7,458,493 in federal IDEA, Part B funding
Private Organizations	600-700 estimated ⁸⁴	600-700 estimated ⁸⁸	Exact count not available	Exact count not available	Primarily tuition, fee, and donation- based funding	Primarily tuition, fee, and donation- based funding

⁸³ Tennessee Dept. of Education. (n.d.). VPK Utilization Application. Tennessee Dept. of Education.

⁸⁴ Estimated based on names of TDOE-approved programs listed in the Department of Human Services program list.
https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/WebProgramList_TN_NID.xlsx

Voluntary Pre-K (VPK)

Tennessee's Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) program, which was created in 2005 with the Voluntary Pre-K Tennessee Act, is a state funded and locally operated program. VPK aims to create a quality academic environment for low-income and at-risk 3 and 4-year-olds to increase their success as they enter kindergarten and throughout their lives.⁸⁵

VPK prioritizes enrollment for 4-year-olds who qualify as economically disadvantaged (operationalized as being in a family that is below 185% of the federal poverty line) or who experience disturbances in their family due to the death or incarceration of a parent. Additional spaces in the program can be filled by educationally at-risk 3 and 4-year olds including: students with disabilities or a part of the Tennessee Early Intervention System, English Learners (EL), or children in state custody.

Many US states, like Florida, offer state-funded Universal Voluntary Preschool to all 4-year-olds across the state.⁸⁶ Tennessee's state funded voluntary preschool is available to a subset of students in the districts that choose to participate in the program based on priority status outlined in law. The program requires districts to provide 25% of the funding which, in some cases, can limit a district's willingness and ability to increase capacity or participation in the program. However, if a district opts into the program, each new classroom is eligible to receive \$127,000 of annual local and state funding.

Head Start and Early Head Start

Head start and Early Head Start are federally funded and locally operated programs that encourage kindergarten readiness for at-risk infants, toddlers, and children from low-income families. In Tennessee, Head Start provides educational, social, and health services to an estimated 20,000 children and families across the state with the goal of promoting school readiness and community engagement.

Tennessee offers three different service types for children 0 to 5: Head Start, Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. In 2022, Head Start provided ECCE to 14,580 children ages 3-5, Early Head Start provided ECCE to 2,269 children ages 0 to 3 and the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program provided ECCE to 225 children ages 0 to 5.

⁸⁶ Florida Dept of Education. (n.d.). *About voluntary prekindergarten*. Florida's VPK Program | DEL. <https://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/floridas-vpk-program>

To be eligible for Head Start, children must live in a household 100%-130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). If extra spaces are available, eligibility exceptions can be made for homeless children, children in foster care, and children with disabilities.

Head Start programs offer services in both stand-alone centers and blended school-based programs in which Head Start operates alongside government, private, faith based, and community organizations.

Special Education & IDEA, Part B

TDOE provides resources and services to children with developmental delays and disabilities using funding from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In 2023, IDEA Part B, Section 619, provided Tennessee with \$7,667,623 of funding to serve children ages 3-5. Funding is used not only to meet legal requirements of IDEA, but also to ensure Tennessee Districts and schools “provide high-quality education in an inclusive setting to all students with disabilities”.

IDEA also requires public schools, including Tennessee’s Voluntary Pre-K, to develop Individualized Education Programs (IEP) to every student with disabilities who meets the federal and state requirements.⁸⁷ In 2018, TDOE released an updated *Special Education Framework* to support educators in writing quality IEP’s. The framework includes IDEA requirements, as well as tips and best practices. Additionally, in 2022, the department developed a similar guide to provide school leadership with important information regarding curriculum delivery, interventions, and services for students with disabilities.⁸⁸

Blended Classrooms. Some districts encourage blended classrooms by reserving VPK slots for non-special needs students to act as peer mentors to students with disabilities. Peer ambassadors qualify for the role based on their ability to serve as a model for other children and gain access to a VPK slot they might otherwise not have qualified for. This creates an incentive to build classrooms that blend students of varying ability levels.

⁸⁷ ECTA Center. (2022, September 21). *Part B, Section 619 of Idea*. <https://ectacenter.org/sec619/sec619.asp>

⁸⁸ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *Special Education*. Tennessee Dept. of Education. <https://www.tn.gov/education/families/student-support/special-education.html>

Private Preschools

Private preschools are ECCE programs that operate as for-profit businesses, independent non-profits, or religiously affiliated programs. While private ECCE programs can be licensed by the TDOE or TDHS, programs that include a kindergarten program are required to seek certification through TDOE.

Private preschools typically charge a tuition or fee for attendance and are available to all families on a first-come-first-serve basis, regardless of factors such as socioeconomic status. The Tennessee list of all regulated birth to 5 and aftercare ECCE programs does not include a data field to identify private programs, but an analysis of the list suggests that over half of all ECCE programs (across both TDOE and TDHS jurisdiction) fall into this category. Private programs make up about a third of TDOE licensed programs.

Department of Human Service Licensed Programs

The Tennessee Department of Human Services licenses a variety of regulated ECCE program types including childcare agencies, family childcare homes, group childcare homes, and drop-in-centers. As previously stated, TDHS licensed programs are privately owned and are available to all families in Tennessee. These programs do not receive their primary source of funding from government agencies. However, in many cases, they are eligible to receive financial support in the form of government grants and aid programs.⁸⁹

TDHS licensed programs can include statewide and national ECCE organizations, corporate ECCE programs, private agencies, faith-based organizations, community and recreational organizations, and programs in a child or care program's own home.

⁸⁹ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *Types of Regulated Childcare*. Tennessee Dept. of Education. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/families/child-care-services/child-care-types-of-regulated-care.html>

Program Type	Number of Programs	Total Seats Available (includes seats for ages 0-18)
Childcare Center	1,819	168,166
Drop-In Center	12	894
Exempt	5	250
Family Group	220	1,542
Group	293	3,483
Total TDHS Licensing	2,349	174,335

Childcare Centers

Childcare centers provide care for more than 13 children. These are the most common regulated ECCE spaces in Tennessee. In 2022, approximately 1,819 childcare centers had a combined capacity of 168,166 seats. In general, childcare centers offer care to a range of ages. The list of all regulated birth to 5 ECCE programs and aftercare in Tennessee shows that programs designated as “Childcare Centers” accepted children from as young as 3 weeks to as old as 18 years, though the average maximum age served is 6 years.

Family Group Homes

Family group homes provide care for at least five but no more than seven unrelated children. Up to five additional children related to the primary caregiver may also receive care in family group homes. Approximately 220 family group homes are licensed in Tennessee and provide 1,542 available seats.

Group Homes

Group homes provide care for at least eight but not more than 12 children. Up to three additional school age children may receive care before and after school, on school holidays, on

snow days, and during summer vacation. There are approximately 293 group homes, which have a combined capacity of about 3,483 available seats.

Drop-In Centers

Drop-In centers provide care for 15 or more children, not to exceed 14 hours per week, and for not more than seven hours per day for any individual child during regular working hours (i.e. Monday - Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.). Drop-in centers can also provide up to six additional hours of care per week during evening (after 6:00 p.m.) and weekends (until 10:00pm on Sunday), if the total number of hours per week does not exceed 20 hours for any individual child, exclusive of snow days. Currently, the state has approximately 12 drop-in centers that serve approximately 812 children.⁹⁰

Additional Programs

Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) & IDEA, Part C

The Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) is a federally funded and locally operated program provided by the Tennessee Department of Intellectual & Development Disabilities. TEIS provides services to families with young children and infants with disabilities or developmental delays. The program works with eligible children ages 0 to 4 and their families to develop a plan and access the resources they need for effective child development. TEIS is free for families and offers a variety of services in clinics and the family's home.⁹¹ Services include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language therapy, and more.

A child's eligibility for TEIS services is determined by the child's doctor and the results of a developmental evaluation. However, child referrals to the program can be made by doctors, families, the Department of Child Services (DCS), or ECCE programs any time before the child's third birthday. Once a child is deemed eligible, their family can choose whether to develop an

⁹⁰ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *Types of Regulated Childcare*. Tennessee Dept of Education. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/families/child-care-services/child-care-types-of-regulated-care.html>

⁹¹ ⁸⁴ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *TEIS*. Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. <https://www.tn.gov/didd/for-consumers/tennessee-early-intervention-system-teis.html>

individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), which involves working with a team to determine the necessary steps to determine optimal development for the child.⁹²

In 2022, TEIS provided services to approximately 16,789 children with IFSPs across the state. Recent reports revealed that child referrals to TEIS in Tennessee have hit record highs. The program currently services more than 2.5 times the number of children served 10 years ago.⁹³

TEIS is a federal program funded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which makes Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), tailored to meet the child's individual needs, available to all children with disabilities.⁹⁴ TEIS is specifically a part of IDEA Part C, which ensures provisions for providing services to infants and toddlers up to their third birthday.⁹⁵

After a child's third birthday, TEIS can help children and their families prepare to transition to the school system. However, for children who are not ready to enter the school system, TEIS in Tennessee recently received federal approval to serve eligible children until their fourth birthday. Now, according to TEIS leadership, TEIS is seeking approval to extend access to services up to a child's fifth birthday to better serve children who are most in need.

Evidence Based Home Visiting (EBHV)

Evidence Based Home Visiting (EBHV) is a service provided to help support struggling or at-risk families with infants and young children. These programs focus on enhancing parenting skills, promoting early learning, creating safe environments for children, and connecting parents with additional social and ECCE service agencies. As a result, this early-intervention strategy creates a safer and healthier life for the children, while also helping families to become more self-sufficient.

⁹² Tennessee Department of Disabilities and Intellectual Services. Tennessee Early Intervention System – Information for Parents. <https://www.tn.gov/didd/for-consumers/tennessee-early-intervention-system-teis/information-for-parents.html>

⁹³ Tennessee Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *TEIS: Early intervention, eligibility & how they rely on you!*. <https://tnaap.org/resources/blog/01/2022/teis-early-intervention-eligibility-how-they-rely-on-you/>

⁹⁴ ⁸⁹ ECTA Center. (n.d.). *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. <https://ectacenter.org/idea.asp>

In FY 2023, EBHV programs in received \$14,371,441 of federal and state funds from a variety of sources including: The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), 2Gen, The Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MEICHV), Healthy Start, and Nurse Home Visitor.⁹⁶

Funding is allocated across 18 agencies in Tennessee that provide three different types of EBHV models including: Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families America, and the Nurse-Family Partnership.⁹⁷ Each of these programs offers slightly different services that involve visiting family homes to build trusting relationships, providing necessary support, and connecting families to additional resources.

EBHV Program	Description
Healthy Families America (HFA)	"HFA is designed to work with overburdened families who are at-risk for adverse childhood experiences, including child maltreatment. The model is best equipped to work with families who may have experienced trauma, intimate partner violence, poor mental health, or substance abuse diagnoses. HFA services begin prenatally or right after the birth of a baby and are offered voluntarily, intensively, and long-term (3 to 5 years after the birth of the baby)."
Nurse Family Partnership (NFP)	"NFP is designed to work with low-income women who are having their first babies. Each woman is enrolled prior to 28 weeks of pregnancy and paired with a nurse who provides her with weekly home visits throughout her pregnancy until her child's second birthday (recommended program length is prenatal – 2 years). The program's main goals are to improve pregnancy outcomes, children's health and development and women's personal health and economic self-sufficiency."
Parents as Teachers (PAT)	"PAT is designed to provide parents with child development knowledge and parenting support, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, prevent child abuse and neglect, and increase children's school readiness. Services include one-on-one home visits, monthly group meetings, developmental screenings, and a resource network for families. The recommended program length is at least 2 years between pregnancy and kindergarten." ⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Tennessee Dept of Health. (n.d.). (rep.). Tennessee Home Visiting Annual Report. Retrieved 2021, from https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/program-areas/reports_and_publications/HV-FY21-LEGISLATIVE-REPORT.pdf

⁹⁷ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *Evidence Based Home Visiting*. Tennessee Dept of Health. <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/tdh-ebhv.html>

According to the Department of Health, priority populations for these services include: Low Income families, pregnant women under 21, children with developmental delays or disabilities, families with members who are serving or have formerly served in the Armed Forces, or families with a history of child abuse, neglect, or substance abuse.⁹⁹

Welcome Baby and Community Health Access & Navigation in Tennessee (CHANT)

Welcome Baby is a universal outreach program created by the Tennessee Department of Health for families with newborns. The program aims to provide families with relevant information based on family needs, connect them with resources and services in the area, and screen the child and family for any risks at the time of the child's birth.¹⁰⁰ In Tennessee, all parents of newborns receive a "Welcome Baby" packet in the mail at the time of the child's birth.¹⁰¹ In addition to providing information about local resources, the Welcome Baby packet provides medical advice and best practices to help prepare parents to more effectively care for their child.

One of the first efforts made by Welcome Baby is to connect eligible parents to the Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee (CHANT), also known as CHANT Care Coordination. CHANT is a program that formed after three social service programs in Tennessee merged: Help Us Grow Successfully (HUGS), Children's Special Services (CCS), and TennCare Kids Community Outreach. CHANT provides families with "enhanced patient centered engagement, assistance with navigating complex systems, and care coordination of medical and social service needs". Individuals are eligible for CHANT if they are ages 0-21 years, pregnant or postpartum adolescents and women, and/or children with special healthcare needs.

⁹⁹ Tennessee Dept of Health. (n.d.). *Tennessee Home Visiting Annual Report*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/program-areas/reports_and_publications/HV-FY21-LEGISLATIVE-REPORT.pdf

^{106, 101} KidCentral TN. (n.d.). *Welcome Baby*. Tennessee Dept of Health.

CHANT Services	Examples
Comprehensive Screenings and Assessments	<p>Child & Family Members Screened for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services Needs • Mental & Behavioral Health Risks • Child Health and Development Needs • Medical Risks • Health Insurance • Medical and Dental Services
Care Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link families to resources and services to help with referrals and respond to medical and social service needs. • Create family care plans and goals. • Support families through CHANT services until need is met. • Connect qualifying families to home visiting programs. • Provide support for children and youth with special health care needs.
Free Checkup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health History • Complete Physical Exam • Lab Tests • Immunizations • Vision/Hearing Screening • Developmental/Behavioral Screening (as needed) • Advice on how to keep the child healthy

Program Capacity: How does supply meet demand?

Approximating the demand for and supply of ECCE

Demand. While it is difficult to quantify the exact number of families currently accessing or seeking ECCE services, there are certain approximations that can be made. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 302,807 children under the age of 6 in Tennessee in families in which all available parents work. This total does not account for the children with one or more parents who desire to work but are not able to due to lack of ECCE.

Supply. It is similarly challenging to get a precise count of all available seats for 0-5 children across all program types. TDHS maintains a record of all regulated birth-5 ECCE and school-age aftercare options for families, which is updated monthly and includes a capacity indicator. The 2021-2022 list has the most complete record of other relevant data like ages served and operating hours, however the 2022-2023 list has the most recent count of available seats.

With these caveats, there are an estimated 324,610 total seats available for children of all ages from 0-18 years across all types of ECCE programs (includes all regulated birth-5 ECCE programs and school-age aftercare options for families in Tennessee licensed by TDHS and approved by TDOE as of 2022).¹⁰²

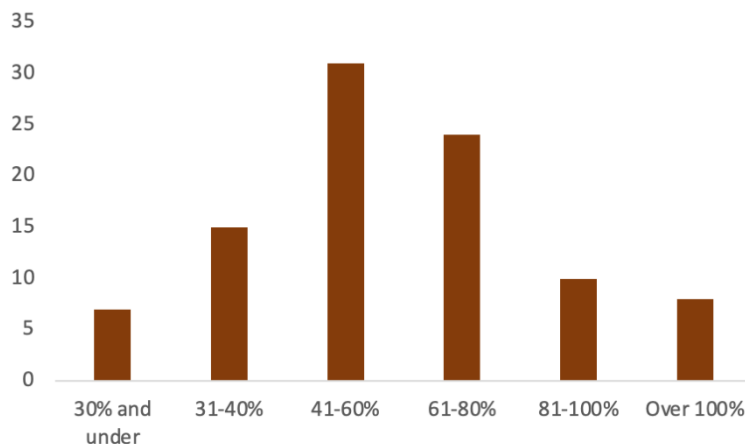
ECCE Availability and Childcare Deserts

Baseline Availability Calculation

Calculating the overall availability of slots for preschool age children in ECCE programs is complex, given the wide variety of program types, many of which serve different age ranges of children, have varying capacities, and operate on different schedules. At the simplest level, we can take the total number of seats available across all programs and ages and divide it by the number of preschool age children from the U.S Census to give a percentage of coverage. This measure does not take into account the number of days per week or hours per day of care provided, nor does it take into account the ages that each program serves. By this measure, the state of Tennessee has enough slots to cover 75% of preschool age children. The graph below illustrates the distribution of levels of coverage (percent of children in a county population that could have a seat) across Tennessee counties using the baseline availability calculation.

¹⁰² TDHS. *Linked list of child care agencies*. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/resources-for-parents/find-child-care.html>

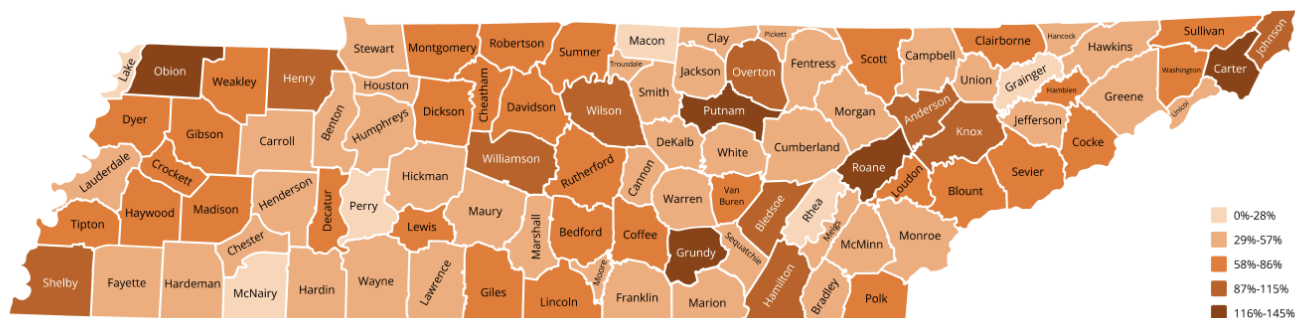
Distribution of ECCE seat coverage for preschool age children across counties



Using this baseline availability measure, some counties across Tennessee qualify as “childcare deserts”. A recent study by the Center for American Progress defines childcare deserts as “any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no childcare programs or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed childcare slots.”¹⁰³

The map below shows the percentage coverage by county using the baseline availability calculation.

Percent coverage of ECCE seats for preschool age children



¹⁰³ Malik, R. V. (2022, May 20). *America's Childcare Deserts in 2018*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>

The table below shows which Tennessee counties would be considered childcare deserts due to their ECCE seat supply vs population of preschool age children.

County	% Coverage
McNairy	16%
Perry	21%
Rhea	26%
Macon	27%
Lake	28%
Grainger	28%
White	29%
Morgan	31%
Smith	32%
Union	32%
Campbell	32%
Marion	33%

It should be noted that this calculation does not consider the families that do not desire ECCE for their children. It also does not consider the hours per day or days per week that each program offers. However, given that many programs only offer before or after care, or a less than five day a week schedule, the actual number of slots that would allow parents to work a full-time job is likely lower than the total used in this calculation.

Age Adjusted Availability Calculation

The baseline calculations omit a key determining factor of availability to preschool age children: Ages accepted in an ECCE program. While only 65% of programs reported any data on accepted age ranges in the 2022-23 list of regulated birth-5 programs and school-age aftercare program options, the 2021-22 list includes this data from all but 1% of programs. We can infer from this list that not all seats in a program's total capacity are open to preschool age children. We can also see indicative imbalances between seats for one age group vs another.

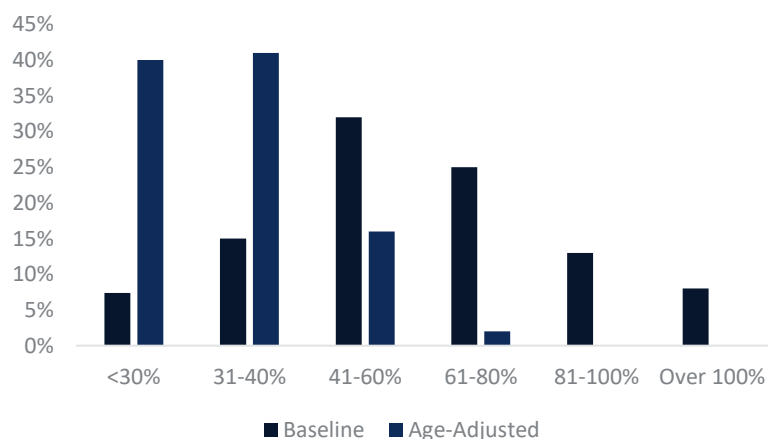
It is impossible to know exactly how many seats are potentially available to children at each age, however some reasonable assumptions can be made to see patterns in the data.

Assuming that an equal share of a program's total capacity would be allocated to each age in the specified age range, we see that only 57% of the total seat capacity is available to preschool age children. The example below illustrates this concept:

Little River Montessori is a school serving ages 3-12 in Louisville, KY and Knoxville, TN. Their total student capacity is 99. We know that only a portion of the 99 total seats will be available for ages 3-5, so we assume about a third of the capacity covers this group given the overall age range reported.

The graph below shows the distribution of coverage levels across Tennessee counties, comparing the baseline calculation to the age-adjusted calculation.

Distribution of ECCE seat coverage for preschool age children across counties, baseline vs age-adjusted calculation



Using the age adjusted calculation, the coverage of ECCE seats for children 0-5 in Tennessee goes from 75% covered to just 40% covered, and 49 Tennessee counties would be considered childcare deserts based the definition provided by the Center for American Progress. A full list of ECCE coverage by county using the baseline and age-adjusted calculation can be found in Appendix B. Counties with smaller preschool age populations tended to show large changes in their percentage ECCE coverage between the two measures.

Coverage level is most acute for children ages 0-3 as the chart below shows. Using the assumption that children are roughly equally distributed across years of age, the chart below shows total seat coverage for children at each age:

Age	ECCE seat coverage for age group
Children age 0-12 mos.	18%
Children age 1	21%
Children age 2	25%
Children age 3	41%
Children age 4	52%
Children age 5	59%

It is important to note that this calculation is based on assumptions as detailed above and is meant to provide more nuance to ECCE availability than the simple baseline calculation that only takes total capacity into account. The age-adjusted calculation gives an indication of the level of ECCE availability specifically for children 0-5. Like the baseline availability calculation, it does not consider families that do not want or need ECCE or weekly/hourly coverage by programs.

Access to Full-Time ECCE for Working Parents

This calculation is an approximate measure of the availability of full-time equivalent ECCE for preschool age children in families where all available parents work. It builds upon the age adjusted calculation and attempts to answer the question: Are there enough ECCE seats for preschool age children that would allow parents to work full-time? While not a precise measure, it gives some insight into the availability of work-enabling ECCE programs.

Just over half (55%) of ECCE programs in Tennessee (based on the 2021-2022 list) offer full-time coverage. These full-time programs provide 57% of the total capacity available.

The table below compares the ECCE seat coverage by age using the age-adjusted calculation to the seat coverage by age considering age-adjustment and only including full-time programs:

Age	ECCE seat coverage for age	Full-time ECCE seat coverage for age
Children age 0-12 mos.	18%	14%
Children age 1	21%	15%
Children age 2	25%	17%
Children age 3	41%	18%
Children age 4	52%	18%
Children age 5	59%	19%

Disproportionate Access

Measuring equity in access is challenging because not all programs are required to report enrollment data. However, we can look at availability of ECCE across counties (using the baseline calculation) compared to the demographics of each county.¹⁰⁴

Rural Areas. Low availability of ECCE was most often found in primarily rural counties. All counties with 50% or lower ECCE coverage are primarily rural except for Union County (which is equally split between urban and rural populations) and Bradley County (primarily urban).

Race/Ethnicity. White children were most likely to be living in a county with 50% or less ECCE coverage and Black children were the least likely to be living in these counties. The table below shows likelihood to be living in a county with 50% or less ECCE coverage across the three largest race/ethnic groups in Tennessee:

Race/Ethnicity	Proportion of total under 4 population	Percent of children of this race/ethnicity residing in a county with 50% or less ECCE coverage
White	67%	18%
Black	18%	4%
Hispanic	11%	10%

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix B for full table of baseline and age adjusted coverage calculations by county, including demographic breakdowns.

It should be noted that this analysis was limited to the county level which does not give a complete picture of racial/ethnic disproportionate access to ECCE. ECCE program locations within a county, towns or city may not be as accessible to some groups vs others, but a more detailed geographic analysis would be required to draw these conclusions.

Poverty. Access to ECCE does not appear to vary significantly across populations above and below the poverty line . 17% of all children below the poverty line in Tennessee live in counties with 50% or less ECCE coverage.

Additional Resources & Funding for Programs

ECCE programs, government agencies, and community organizations in Tennessee are continuously working to increase accessibility to quality ECCE. Efforts to increase accessibility typically involve increasing the number of seats available, increasing family awareness and ability to find care, and enhancing the quality of existing programs. Below are some examples of Tennessee's most prominent efforts to increase the accessibility of ECCE:

Childcare Resource & Referral Center (CCR&R)

The Childcare Resource & Referral Center is a statewide organization in Tennessee that provides resources to families, educators, and ECCE program directors across the state. Today, CCR&R operates eight sites that work with all 95 counties to increase the quality and accessibility of ECCE across the state. CCR&R provides a wide variety of services such as facilitating licensure of new programs, coaching educators, and connecting families with ECCE programs that meet their needs. Below are just a few of the supports that aim to increase access to ECCE.

Tennessee Department of Human Services Pre-licensure Unit. In 2021, the Department of Human Services developed a Pre-licensure Unit responsible for assisting prospective and new ECCE programs in the process of becoming licensed. The goal of the unit is to increase ECCE capacity and provide new agencies with the necessary training and guidance to become successful and compliant programs. The Pre-licensure Unit develops meaningful relationships with businesses and community organizations, collaborates with communities to assess the current ECCE needs, and helps to simplify the licensing process. The unit is especially focused on rural communities and areas in Tennessee that lack the necessary support for quality ECCE.

In addition to the Pre-licensure Unit, the Tennessee Department of Human Services recently developed a new online pre-licensure application. The launch of this service is part of a greater effort to move many staff operations online to increase efficiency and data collection.¹⁰⁵

Child Care Search Tool. The Childcare Search Tool is an online tool provided by the Childcare Resource and Referral Center that helps families find ECCE near them that meets their needs based on selected criteria. The tool was created as a part of an effort to modernize the ECCE services offered by the state. It allows parents to sort through over 2,000 programs by location, program type, ages served, quality ratings, and more to find the program that works best for their families.

Childcare Establishment, Expansion, and Enhancement Grants

The Establishment & Expansion Grants are grants provided by the Tennessee Department of Human Services to provide financial support for furniture, equipment, supplies, and curriculum costs associated with opening a new ECCE agency or expanding existing agencies. Leveraging federal funding from the *American Rescue Plan Act*, agencies are eligible to receive \$1,000 for every seat added to their care facilities. According to TDHS, since COVID, over 12,000 slots of license capacity have been created and the agency has distributed over \$500 million to support and expand existing programs, while also opening new programs.

The Childcare Enhancement Grants are a state effort to provide ECCE programs with additional funds to increase capacity, quality, and compliance with state licensing standards. A base amount of \$4,000 is available to all ECCE programs licensed by the Department of Human Services. Some programs may be eligible for additional funding if they are 'economically distressed' counties identified by the Governor, specialize in Infant & Toddler care, are seeking national accreditations, or participate in the Childcare Certificate Program. Grant funds may be used on equipment, program enhancements, or consultants and coaches for professional development and curriculum improvement.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Tennessee Dept of Human Services. (2022). (rep.). Tennessee Childcare Task Force Interim Report. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/07.01.22%20TN%20CCTF%20Interim%20Status%20Report_PC%20474.pdf.

¹⁰⁶ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). Child care incentives, grants and supports. Tennessee Dept of Human Services. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-resources-for-programs/wages--mini-grants-and-more.html>

Corporate Partnerships

The Department of Human Services is working with corporations in Tennessee to open new ECCE facilities for company employees. The largest and most prominent example of this program is Tyson Foods. In 2022, Tyson announced that development of a subsidized ECCE program for their frontline team members at a processing plant in Humboldt, Tennessee. The program includes the creation of a \$3.5 million ECCE facility that will employ 18 ECCE workers and serve 100 children between the ages of 0-5.¹⁰⁷ This example, along with many others, is part of TDHS's continuing effort to involve Tennessee employers in increasing accessibility of ECCE across the state.

Additional Resources & Financial Aid for Parents

In addition to many of the state, federal, and locally funded resources mentioned previously, Tennessee offers a wide variety of resources that aim to increase access to quality ECCE for families in need. These resources range from tools to financial aid and in-home services and are offered by a wide range of government agencies and community organizations.

Smart Steps

Smart Steps is an ECCE payment assistance program that provides financial aid to working parents and parents pursuing post-secondary education. To be eligible for the program, parents must have a gross income below the 85th percentile of State Median Income, work and/or be in school no less than 30 hours per week, and have a child between the ages of 6 weeks and 5 years of age.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, Smart Steps only covers a portion of tuition costs, so parents are required to pay the remainder of the tuition based on the program they choose.¹⁰⁹

Smart Steps aid is available for a variety of program types that span ECCE government agencies, schools, community-based organizations, etc. In 2023, the Smart Steps program received \$345 million from the federal government which helped support 31,505 children ages 0-5 across the state.

¹⁰⁷ (2022, April). *Tyson Foods breaks ground on childcare facility for Humboldt, Tennessee, Team members*. Tyson Foods. <https://www.tysonfoods.com/news/news-releases/2022/4/tyson-foods-breaks-ground-childcare-facility-humboldt-tennessee-team>

¹⁰⁸ Tennessee State Government (n.d.). *Child care payment assistance*. Tennessee Dept of Human Services. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-payment-assistance.html>

¹⁰⁹ Tennessee [Dept. of Human Services. Childcare certificate program income eligibility limits and parent co-pay fee table FY 2022-2023.](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Income%20Eligibility%20and%20Parent%20Co-Pay%20Fee%20Table%202022-2023.pdf) <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Income%20Eligibility%20and%20Parent%20Co-Pay%20Fee%20Table%202022-2023.pdf>

A study conducted by the Department of Human Services Childcare Task Force (CCTF) found that parent awareness of Smart Steps and similar programs was low across the state. As of 2022, only 28% of children under 5 living in poverty were participating in Smart Steps.¹¹⁰

Families First & Tennessee's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Families First, Tennessee's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, is a workforce development program that focuses on work, training, and personal responsibility assistance for low-income families. The goal of the program is to increase self-sufficiency for individuals by providing a variety of temporary support services. Eligible participants can receive cash assistance, ECCE assistance, educational support, job training, and more for up to 60 months throughout their lifetime.¹¹¹

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Established in 1968, the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP) is a federally funded program that provides aids to care facilities to provide nutritious foods to ensure health and wellness of children, older adults, and people with chronic disabilities. The program provides reimbursements to care centers, settlement houses, and recreation centers that provide eligible meals to low-income children and adults.¹¹²

In Tennessee, CACFP is operated by TDHS. According to the TDHS web program list, there are approximately 2,086 ECCE programs and schools, about 50% of all programs, that providing CACFP services.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (2022). (rep.). Tennessee Childcare Task Force Final Report. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/TN%20CCTF%20Final%20Report_12.15.22.pdf.

¹¹¹ Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (n.d.-j). Families first. Tennessee State Government - TN.gov. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/families/families-first-tanf.html>

¹¹² Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (n.d.-j). Child and Adult Food Care Program. Tennessee State Government - TN.gov. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/children/dhs-nutrition-programs/child-and-adult-care-food-program.html>

¹¹³ (n.d.). Tennessee Dept. of Human Services Childcare Program List.

The table below displays the number of programs that provide CACFP based on the DHS Program Web List.

Regulatory Agency	Programs NOT Providing CACFP	Programs Providing CACFP	% of Programs Providing CACFP
Tennessee Department of Human Resources	587	1761	75%
Tennessee Department of Education	1525	325	18%
Grand Total	2112	2086	50%

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is an initiative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides individuals with nutritional assistance.¹¹⁴ In Tennessee, the Department of Human Services manages SNAP operations as a part of the efforts help Tennesseans become self-sufficient, contributing members of the state.

Local Spotlights

As discussed previously, the Tennessee ECCE ecosystem is decentralized with many different organizations at all levels playing an integral role in the delivery of services. Therefore, acknowledging local organizations and their contributions to the ECCE landscape is important for gaining a holistic understanding of the system.

¹¹⁴ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. Dept of Human Services. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap.html>

In Tennessee, local organizations provide many different services including raising and distributing funding to increase capacity, advocating for the importance of ECCE, training the ECCE workforce, and connecting families to resources provided by the community and state. In some cases, local contributors can more effectively meet their counties' specific needs. In others, the organizations work to fill the gaps created by statewide agencies.

The list below contains a few examples of organizations that have had notable achievements in their improving their local ECCE offerings.

Promethean Foundation – Obion County

The Promethean Foundation, founded by Robert E. and Jenny D. Kirkland in 2004, is a non-profit organization that strives to ensure all children in Obion County have access to quality ECCE. The Promethean Foundation, or Pro-Kids, partners with local ECCE agencies to enroll children in programs and connect families, educators, and program directors with the resources they need. The work of Pro-Kids could not be done without the Promethean Advisory Board, which has over 100 community volunteers to from Obion County.¹¹⁵ Interestingly, data analysis from the TDHS web program list revealed that Obion County has the second highest seat capacity per child for children ages 0-5. While there is no way to attribute this finding to the Promethean Foundation alone, it is important to note the benefits of local organizations on the community.¹¹⁶

First 8 Memphis – Shelby County

First 8 Memphis is a local non-profit that aims to “build an early childcare and education system that will allow every child in Shelby County to have a successful first eight years and a strong base for lifetime success.” The organization partners with the City of Memphis and Shelby County government to coordinate and provide funding for ECCE programs.

First 8 Memphis has made notable achievements in improving the ECCE environment on a local level. In 2019, First 8 Memphis increased the number of ECCE seats available from 7,800 to 8,500. This effort also helped increase needs-based seats from 1,360 to 1,600.

¹¹⁵ Promethean Foundation. (n.d.). <https://www.4prokids.org/>

¹¹⁶ (n.d.). Tennessee Dept. of Human Services Program Web List Analysis.

Additionally, First 8 Memphis is responsible for managing the city's \$14 million investment in ECCE Data Infrastructure to increase the accountability and transparency of programs. Finally, the organization leveraged \$22.4 million from state and national partners to support ECCE initiatives, such as instructional coaching for educators and enhanced family wraparound services.¹¹⁷

Additional Analysis on Family Income and ECCE Accessibility

As earlier described, family income level is a strong determinant of access to ECCE and several programs exist to strengthen ECCE access for families at lower income levels. These programs give access to children who might not otherwise have the benefit of ECCE. However, these programs fall short of addressing the full range of need.

The analyses below examine the three largest accessibility support programs in Tennessee: VPK, Head Start/Early Head Start and Smart Steps.

Availability of Low or No Cost ECCE Programs vs Number of Income Qualified Children

This analysis seeks to approximate the number of eligible children that could benefit from a program that would make ECCE accessible to them. It addresses the question: "Does enough support exist to give age and income eligible children access to ECCE in Tennessee via low or no-cost programs?"

The table below compares the available spots in four ECCE low or no-cost programs: VPK, Head Start, Early Head Start and Smart Steps. These programs endeavor to make ECCE more accessible by providing no-cost seats, or reimbursement to the program in the case of Smart Steps.

Each accessibility program has an income eligibility requirement as outlined in the table. Income eligibility depends on family size, so for the purposes of this analysis we will assume that all children live in families of four members. The row titled "Estimated percent of income and age-eligible children who cannot access program" is calculated by subtracting the number of available spots in a program from the approximate total children of relevant age who would live in families with an income that qualifies them for the program and calculating the percent of qualified children.

¹¹⁷ First 8 Memphis. (n.d.). <https://www.first8memphis.org/>

This hypothetical scenario does not reflect the true reality of varied family sizes. It is meant to give a sense of the magnitude of the gaps that exist available support for ECCE accessibility and the number of children who need that support due to their family income.

	VPK	Head Start	Early Head Start	Smart Steps
Primary Ages Eligible	4-5 (pre-kindergarten)*	3-5 (pre-kindergarten)	0-2	0-5
Spots Available	2021, VPK had 18,500 spots ¹¹⁸	2021, Head Start had 14,097 spots ¹¹⁹	2021, Early Head Start had 2,383 spots ¹²⁰	2021, Smart Steps supported 34,501 children
Income Upper Limit – family of 4	\$48K (rounded) ¹²¹	\$30K ¹²²	\$30K ¹³²	\$72K (rounded) ¹²³
Estimated percent of income and age eligible children who cannot access program	45%	56%	94%	84%

***3 year old's are eligible only if there are no income-qualifying 4-5 year old's**

¹¹⁸⁻¹²⁷ Data provided by Tennessee Department of Education.

¹²¹ VPK Income Guidelines: <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/early-learning/pre-k/2020PovertyGuidelines.pdf>.

¹²² HHS Poverty Guidelines: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

¹²³ Smart Steps Income Guidelines: <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Income%20Eligibility%20and%20Parent%20Co-Pay%20Fee%20Table%202022-2023.pdf>

Analysis of ECCE Affordability for Income Ineligible Families

Limited access due to financial constraints is also a challenge for families with incomes higher than the limits for the accessibility programs analyzed above. Significant portions of Tennessee children live in families that would not qualify for access programs based on income, but still struggle to afford the cost of ECCE.

Affordability can be a subjective, however the US Department of Health & Human Services defines childcare as affordable if it requires no more than 7% of a family's gross annual income.¹²⁴ The cost of ECCE varies by program type and age of child. The table below illustrates the average cost of ECCE across all counties in Tennessee, compared to the annual income necessary to make the cost affordable for one child.¹²⁵ It requires nearly \$100K annual income to afford all types of ECCE across preschool age groups.

	Infant (age 0)		Toddler (age 1)		Preschool (ages 2-5)	
	Cost per child per year	Annual income required (rounded)	Cost per child per year	Annual income required	Cost per child per year	Annual income required (rounded)
Center-based	\$11,068	\$158K	\$10,184	\$145K	\$9,594	\$137K
Home-based	\$7,194	\$103K	\$6,749	\$96K	\$6,569	\$94K

The qualifying income levels for the four accessibility programs shown in the previous analysis are well below the annual income required to afford ECCE at either a center-based or home-based program for any age child.

¹²⁴ (2022, July 6). Childcare Aware® of America. *Childcare access and affordability*. <https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/public-policy/child-care-access-and-affordability/>

¹²⁵ Permaul, B. (2017). (rep.). Determining Childcare Market Rates in the State of Tennessee. Tennessee Dept of Human Services.

The table below illustrates the percentages of families that would earn too much to qualify for low or no-cost programs but do not earn enough to make ECCE affordable (assuming family size of 4). The cost per child per year takes the average cost across infant, toddler and preschool rates.

	Cost per child per year (rounded)	Annual income required (rounded)	Percent of families that are income in-eligible for low or no cost program but who cannot afford ECCE based on gross family income ¹²⁶		
			VPK	Head Start	Smart Steps
Center-based	\$10,300	\$147K	53%	66%	35%
Home-based	\$6,800	\$98K	34%	48%	16%

It is important to note that this analysis makes some key assumptions. Without knowing the distribution of preschool age children across family sizes, this analysis has the same limitations as the previous one. Like previous analyses, it also does not consider families that may not desire ECCE programs. However, these numbers indicate the magnitude of the accessibility gap that exists due to the high cost of ECCE and the limitations of low or no-cost programs.

¹²⁶ Income levels taken from gross annual incomes of families with children under 6 from U.S Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Assumption that family income levels are roughly the same for families with children ages 3-4 specifically.

Quality

When it comes to ECCE, the term “quality” can mean many things. However, the importance of providing quality care remains constant whether a child is in a public preschool, a drop-in-center, or at home with a guardian.

Therefore, information about the quality of ECCE can be crucial in helping parents choose the program that is best suited to their child’s needs. However, a recent report showed that 50% of Tennessee parents cited “quality” as one of the most significant challenges when searching for ECCE.¹²⁷

To ensure that parents have the tools necessary to properly select a program, and that children are being served with quality care, it is important to first understand how Tennessee defines quality, how quality is measured, and how the data is used by the state to inform government processes.

ECCE Quality in Tennessee

Quality ratings of ECCE programs in Tennessee vary in their standards and measurement tools based on the type of program, its licensing status, and the preferences of program directors. Many programs leverage a single rating system for determining licensing standards and quality achievements. However, some programs use a combination of different systems: one system to receive standard licensing standards and another to measure quality achievements.

TDHS: Quality Rating Improvement System

In 2001, Tennessee became one of the first states to launch a Quality Rating and Improvement System with the goal of developing consistent ratings for ECCE programs. The use of the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) also hopes to provide parents with the necessary tools to make informed decisions when choosing the right ECCE for their families.

All programs licensed by the Department of Human Services, except for drop-in-centers, are required to meet the minimum standards defined by QRIS. These programs receive an annual

¹²⁷ (2022, December). *The Economics of Tennessee’s Childcare Crisis*. Tennesseans for Quality Early Education. <https://tqee.org/app/uploads/2022/12/2022-TQEE-Child-Care-Study.pdf>

evaluation and are required to post results. Of the programs that use QRIS, 80% receive the highest quality rating.

Since the creation of QRIS, the system has remained almost entirely unchanged. However, this year the state completely revised the structure of QRIS and, in many ways, redefined what “quality ECCE” means across the state.¹²⁸

The previous QRIS model leveraged a 3-star rating system and assessed programs once a year.¹²⁹ The new QRIS model now uses a 100-point numeric rating system in which the score is calculated as an average of four total visits throughout the year. Additionally, while the former system tended to focus on the class environment, the new program places more emphasis on health, safety, and teacher/child interactions.¹³⁰

Despite the recency of the transition, and the lack of data collection on the new model, both systems are discussed below.

The Former QRIS: 2001-2023

From 2001 to 2023, the Star Quality Program served as Tennessee’s Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). Programs rated by this QRIS were visited by licensing consultants once a year and received a childcare report card ranking the program on topics including: professional development for educators, developmental learning, parent/family engagement, business management, program assessment, and child health and well-being.

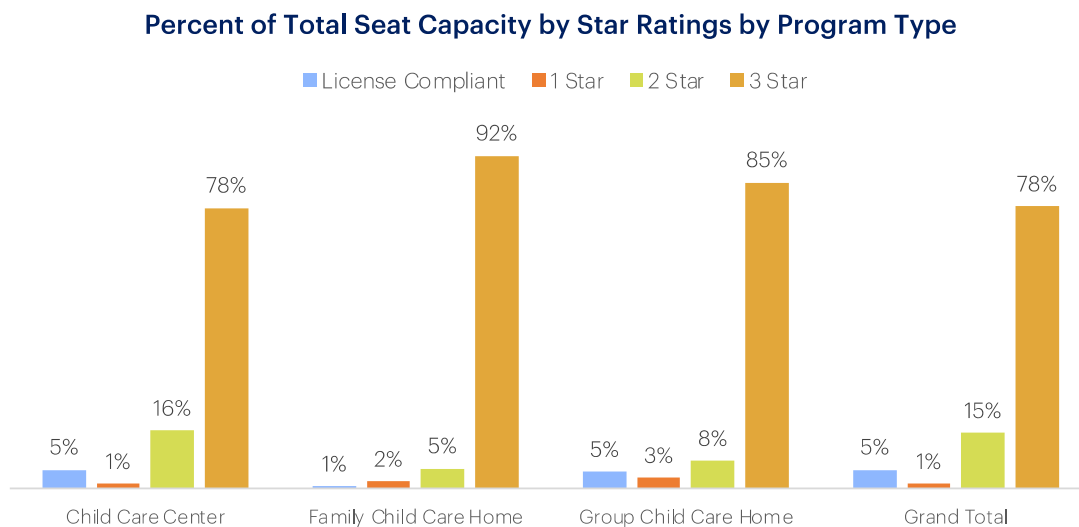
The Star Quality Program used a three-star rating system to determine different levels of program quality. All programs that participated in the Star Quality Program were required to achieve the minimum licensing standards (0 stars). Programs could then receive a one, two, or three star ranking for their additional quality achievements. The Star Quality Program was designed to ensure that baseline standards were met, while also providing opportunities for ECCE programs to be recognized for providing care that exceeded expectations.

¹²⁸ Tennessee Dept. Of Human Services. (n.d.). *Child Care News Brief, Child Care Services Newsletter*. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Child%20Care%20Services%20August%202021%20Newsletter.pdf>

¹²⁹ Tennessee State Government. (2019, May 1). Dept. of Human Services. *Star Quality Report Card*. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/C-Web.Star%20Quality%20Child%20Care%20Center%20Report%20Card.pdf>

¹³⁰ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). Dept. of Human Services. *Program Monitoring and Inspections*. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-resources-for-programs/child-care-program-monitoring-and-inspections.html>

While this rating system is no longer in use, the most recent data shows that nearly 78% of seat capacity in QRIS-participating programs were in 3-star programs.¹³¹ According to program managers, the program ratings are frozen while the state implements the new QRIS model this year.



Below is a chart showing the % of available seats in each program type based on star rating.

The New QRIS: Post-2023

In 2021, the Tennessee Department of Human Services set out to redesign the QRIS based on feedback from programs and quality experts across the state. The improvements made to the New QRIS focused on “five big ideas” for improving the system:

1. More appropriately merging the roles of licensers and quality assessors to develop
2. Identifying “Essential Quality Indicators” that increase focus on teacher/child interactions and child health and safety.
3. Developing enhanced relationship-based support and providing more frequent observations to gain a more accurate understanding of program quality.
4. Investing financial resources in quality through progress-based incentives.
5. Ensuring that quality ratings are presented to be easily read and understood by parents.¹³²

¹³¹ (n.d.). Tennessee Department of Human Services Program Web List Analysis.

¹³² Tennessee Dept. Of Human Services. (n.d.). *Child Care News Brief, Child Care Services Newsletter*.

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Child%20Care%20Services%20August%202021%20Newsletter.pdf>

This year, the new quality rating system launched for the first time across the state. In the new system, a Licensing Consultant visits each ECCE program four times throughout the year, one of which is unannounced. Programs then receive a score based on the average of all visits. ECCE programs are rated using a 100-point numeric system that focuses on health and safety (weighted 60%), and teacher/child interactions (weighted 40%).¹³³

New ratings for the school will be published in October 2023.

TDOE: Quality Rating Tools Used in Tennessee

For many programs in Tennessee, choosing to measure quality beyond the required licensing and certification requirements is optional. As a result, different ECCE program may choose to use other quality tools that more appropriately align with the goals of their program. Some programs choose to opt out of additional quality ratings entirely.

CLASS and TEAM, discussed in detail below, are among the most prominent quality measurement tools used in by TDOE certified programs. However, some programs also leverages systems including CLASS Environments and Project COACH.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a proven and flexible rating system that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in preschool classrooms. CLASS focuses on 3 main categories:

Emotional Support – This category measures the teacher’s efforts to “establish and promote a positive climate in their classroom”. Quality classrooms are responsive to children, acknowledge children’s feelings or emotions, help children resolve problems, redirect challenging behavior, and support positive peer relationships.

Classroom Organization – This category assesses “procedures related to the organization and management of children’s behavior, time, and attention in the classroom”. Quality Classrooms have: consistent schedules, well-designed learning centers, established routines, and sensitive and appropriate guidance strategies.

¹³³ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). Dept. of Human Services. *Program Monitoring and Inspections*.
<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-resources-for-programs/child-care-program-monitoring-and-inspections.html>

Instructional Support – This category assesses teachers' use of “curriculum to effectively promote cognitive and language development”. Effective teachers support children's engagement by making concepts and skills relevant to their everyday lives, asking questions that encourage children to analyze and reason, providing the right amount of help, and offering feedback that acknowledges children's attempts.¹³⁴

While CLASS is a very robust and innovative rating system, it does have some limitations. The system does not measure curriculum used or provide an ongoing assessment of a child's progress.

Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM)

The Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) is an evaluation tool created by the Tennessee Department of Education that aims to help educators continuously improve their practice. The system uses observations and data to understand how educators are delivering lessons and what students are learning from their lessons. TEAM focuses on evaluating the growth of teacher's skills by analyzing the growth in their students' achievement. While TEAM is primarily used for K-12 evaluation, there are ECCE programs across the state that choose to use this model.¹³⁵

Quality for Specific Programs

As previously stated, ECCE programs in Tennessee measure and implement quality differently based on requirements and preferences. Below are examples of efforts from different programs to ensure that children are receiving care in safe and engaging environments.

¹³⁴ U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services. (2023, January 13). *Use of Classroom Assessment Scoring System*. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/designation-renewal-system/article/use-classroom-assessment-scoring-system-class-head->

¹³⁵ Tennessee Dept. of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher Evaluation*. <https://team-tn.org/teacher-evaluation/>

Quality for Voluntary Pre-K

Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) programs, like all Tennessee Department of Education certified programs, are required to meet the *Standards for School Administered Childcare Programs*.¹³⁶ As a state funded operation, TDOE has developed additional resources and efforts to ensure that VPK upholds high quality standards, while also providing flexibility for programs to innovate at the program level. For example, in addition to adhering to the state licensing standards, all VPK programs are required to follow the VPK Scope of Services, collect data that measures quality teaching and learning, and use data in their coaching model. While the state does encourage the use of CLASS® for consistency purposes, ultimately the choice is left to the programs themselves.

Additionally, in 2016, the Tennessee General Assembly passed the Pre-K Quality Act to solidify the continuing improvement of the Voluntary Pre-K program. This effort created a shared definition of “quality” and supported additional data-driven enhancements such as requiring annual training on the Pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) and piloting CLASS observations and coaching for preschool teachers. The act also resulted in a reduction of 37 curricula down to 3 research-based high-quality curricula. Finally, the program implemented student growth portfolios and now uses a competitive application process to award funding based on quality.¹³⁷ In 2022, Tennessee’s Voluntary Pre-K program was also recognized by the National Institute for Early Education Research as one of only 12 states to meet 9 out of 10 quality standard benchmarks.¹³⁸

Since 2016, Tennessee’s Voluntary Pre-K Program has increase by five benchmarks, and for the third year in a row, has been recognized as one of the few states to meet 9 out of 10 quality benchmarks.

¹³⁶ The State Board of Education. (n.d.). Standards for School Administered Child Care Programs. <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/rules/0520/0520-12/0520-12-01.20180801.pdf>

¹³⁷ Dickerson, Haile, Yarbro. (2016, March 21). Public Chart No. 703. Senate Bill No. 1899 State of Tennessee. <https://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Pre-K-Quality-Act-SB1899.pdf>

¹³⁸ NIEER. (2022). The State of Preschool 2021. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/YB2021_Full_Report.pdf

VPK Quality Data Sample

While VPK programs choose which quality measurement tool to use for staff training and continuous quality improvement, the TDOE encourages the use of CLASS for consistency purposes.

The chart below displays the average CLASS quality ratings for a sample of VPK teachers across the state between 2021-2023. Overall, the sample data shows that emotional support and classroom organizations have remained relatively consistent. However, instructional support, which ranked the lowest throughout all analyzed periods, appears to be increasing in score for the teachers included in the sample.¹³⁹

Note: The data presented does have significant limitations. Some VPK programs do not use CLASS as a quality measure and, as a result, the data may not be an accurate reflection of how state VPK programs are performing.

	Fall 2021 (n = 140 VPK Teachers)	Spring 2022 (n = 140 VPK Teachers)	Fall 2022 (n = 192 VPK Teachers)	Spring 2023 (n = 192 VPK Teachers)
Emotional Support	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.4
Classroom Organization	6.0	6.1	5.9	6.1
Instructional Support	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.9

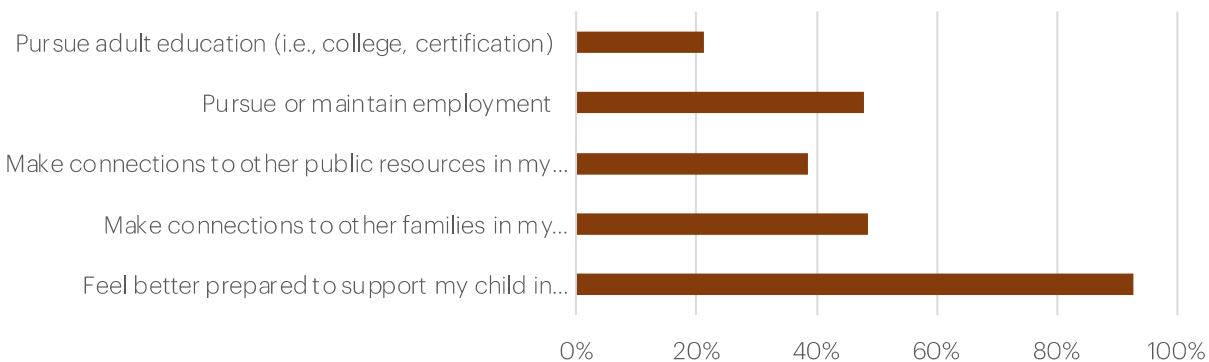
Parent Satisfaction Survey

In addition to using standardized quality tools, the VPK program also collects data for continuous improvement through an annual family survey. In 2022, the survey collected valuable data from 4684 families across the state. The survey responses revealed interesting insights into the challenges, opportunities, and perceived benefits of using the program.

¹³⁹ Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). Sample Quality Data from VPK 2021-2023 School Years.

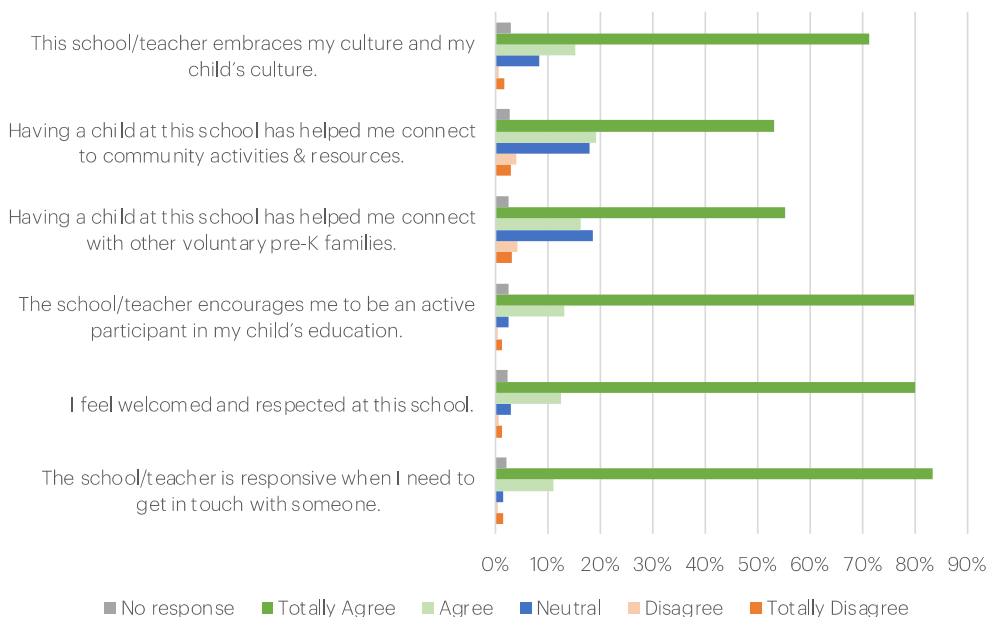
Approximately, 93% of families surveyed say the program helped them feel prepared to support their child through kindergarten. In contrast, only 21% of families report that the program helped them pursue adult education, and only 39% felt the program helped connect their family to additional public resources in the community.

% of Parents that VPK Enabled to...



Families report positive day-to-day experiences with VPK. Over 90% of parents agree or totally agree that the program is welcoming, responsive to parent's needs, and encourages parents to be active in their child's education.¹⁴⁰

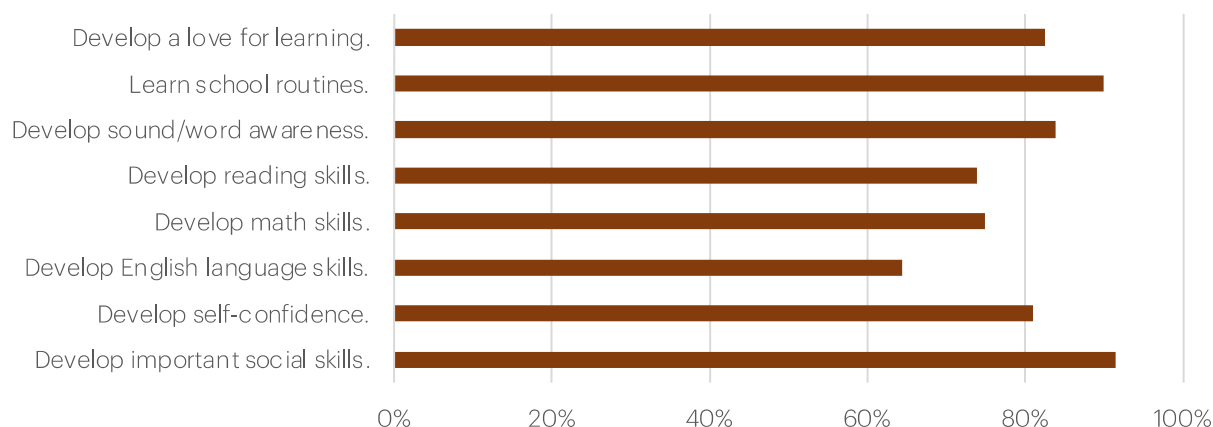
2021-2022 Parent Sentiment on VPK Services



¹⁴⁰ (2022). VPK Annual Parent Survey.

Finally, as an educational program with structured curriculum, the survey attempts to understand family's perceptions on how VPK is educating their child. Survey results show that most families feel VPK helped their child develop skills across all subjects. However, development of important social skills and learning school routines appear to be especially noticeable to families.

% of Parents Who Agree that VPK Helped Their Child...



Quality for Evidence Based Home Visiting

As previously mentioned, Evidence Based Home Visiting (EBHV) is a resource available to Tennessee families with children ages 0-5 through the Tennessee Department of Health. To ensure the quality of EBHV programs, the TDH Early Childhood Initiative Team partners with Local Implementing Agencies (LIA's) to develop and activate Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) strategies. The CQI initiatives are not standardized across the state or over time. Instead CQI projects vary each year based on trend data to best address the current needs of the families being served. For example, projects in the past have focused on retaining families in social programs and tobacco cessation for enrolled caregivers.¹⁴¹

The Cost of Quality Care in Tennessee

In 2022, the Tennessee Department of Human Services conducted a study to gain a deeper understanding of the cost of providing quality ECCE in Tennessee. A sample of 300 ECCE agencies were asked to report 2019 expenditures across a variety of categories to understand the key drivers in ECCE costs.

¹⁴¹ (2021). Home Visiting Annual Report.

Limitations of the Study:

- *While the study provides rich insights into the operational expenses of ECCE, programs across the state vary significantly in their offerings, facility types, operating hours etc. For example, programs that operate in faith-based facilities may not pay for a lease which can reduce costs significantly.*
- *This study was conducted using data from the former QRIS model. Data has yet to be collected using the new QRIS model.*
- *Finally, the study only sampled DHS licensed programs, leaving DOE licensed programs out of the sample.*

Nevertheless, the study did reveal findings that can be leveraged to make assumptions for improving the quality of ECCE across the state.

Of the agencies analyzed, 93% were independently operated agencies with the remainder being owned by franchises, corporations, etc. Additionally, most programs (61.5%) served 13 or more children. All programs analyzed used the 3-star QRIS discussed previously to ensure consistency when analyzing expenditures to program quality.

Findings revealed that the average total cost of ECCE for independently operated ECCE agencies was \$292,378, compared to \$359,173 for Franchises and \$1,469,594 for other operations. Salary was by far the highest expense for these programs, accounting for 57% of the total annual expenses.¹⁴²

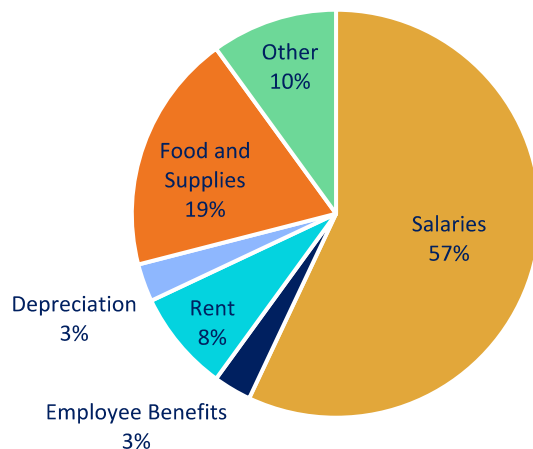
¹⁴² The University of Tennessee & Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. (2022). (rep.). Cost of Quality Care Study. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Cost%20of%20Quality%20Care%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Below is a table showing the breakdown of expenditures by program type by category.

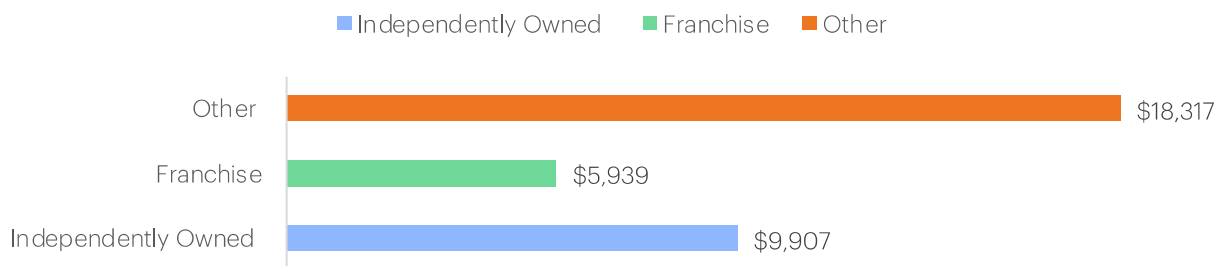
	Independently Owned (n=277)		Franchise (n=5)		Other (n=17)	
	Mean	% of Expenses	Mean	% of Expenses	Mean	% of Expenses
Salaries	\$215,773	74%	\$197,263	55%	\$883,799	60%
Benefits	\$8,585	3%	\$27,726	8%	\$270,773	18%
Rent expense	\$18,088	6%	\$45,132	13%	\$115,490	8%
Depreciation expense	\$4,896	2%	\$18,760	5%	\$33,994	2%
Food and supplies	\$23,201	8%	\$34,125	10%	\$89,203	6%
Educational supplies	\$8,214	3%	\$9,150	3%	\$53,321	4%
Transportation expense	\$1,272	0%	\$3,125	1%	\$5,132	0%
Training and PD	\$2,107	1%	\$8,567	2%	\$12,325	1%
Childcare Insurance	\$10,242	4%	\$15,325	4%	\$5,557	0%
Total	\$292,378		\$359,173		\$1,469,594	

Below is a chart depicting the average annual expenditures by category across all ECCE programs.

Share Total Reported Expenditures

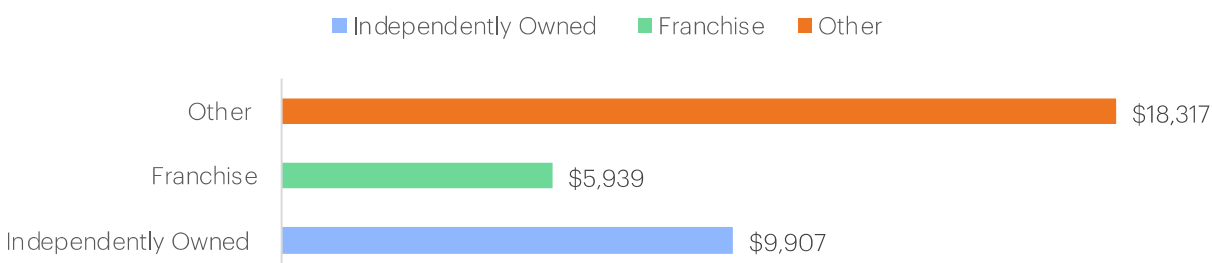


Cost of Child Care per Child by Agency Type



In addition to analyzing the total cost of providing ECCE, the study also revealed that the cost of care per child varied significantly between program types and quality level. However, on average the cost of care per child was \$9,907 in independently operated agencies compared to \$5,939 for franchises and \$18,317 for other operations.

Cost of Child Care per Child by Agency Type



More interestingly, findings revealed that programs with a 3-star rating spent on average 4 times more per child on employee salaries and training than programs rated 0-1 star. 3-star programs were also more likely to offer benefits including tuition assistance for professional development, greater retirement contributions, and program discounts for educators' children. Higher expenditures on payroll and benefits per child may indicate that quality programs typically have greater staff/student ratios with more qualified educators who command greater compensation.

Additional Efforts to Coordinate Across the ECCE System

With Tennessee's decentralized approach to ECCE, there are efforts from different organizations across the public and private sector to collaborate. Collaboration enables organizations to expand their outreach, gain access to additional funding and resources, and better address the needs of the children and families being serviced. Additionally, collaboration occurs at all levels from state-wide to local initiatives. Below are some of the most notable collaboration efforts known across the state.

Tennessee Childcare Task Force (CCTF)

The State of Tennessee convened a Tennessee Childcare Task Force (CCTF) responsible for developing a strategic action plan for improving the availability of ECCE, building cross-state partnerships, and identifying opportunities for streamlined government processes regarding ECCE. The final report, published in December 2022, details CCTF's 9 recommendations to the Tennessee General Assembly. The CCTF is a 15-member body made up of commissioners from 5 Tennessee state departments, 2 members of the General Assembly, and 6 executive leaders from community-based organizations, including the Chambliss Center for Children and the Tennessee Alliance of Boys & Girls Club.

Tennesseans for Quality Early Education (TQEE)

TQEE works to coordinate an understanding and focus on early education issues at the state level by directly educating and lobbying in the General Assembly. They also build on-the-ground community partnerships, through Bright Star TN, that accelerate early learning outcomes for Tennessee children birth through third grade.

Appendix A

County Demographic Data

County	Total Population Under 5 ¹⁴³	% of TN's Total Population Under 5	% Foreign-Born Under 5 ¹⁴⁴	Pop. 5-17 in Non-English-Speaking Households with limited English proficiency ¹⁴⁵	% Not in Nursery or Preschool Age 3 & 4 ¹⁴⁶	% of families with child under 6 with all available parents working ¹⁴⁷
Anderson	4035	0.99%	0%	155	53.79%	69%
Bedford	3347	0.82%	0%	461	73.83%	72%
Benton	756	0.19%	0%	0	63.07%	68%
Bledsoe	532	0.13%	0%	25	72.12%	53%
Blount	6597	1.63%	11%	197	64.80%	62%
Bradley	6063	1.49%	3%	471	67.00%	69%
Campbell	2246	0.55%	0%	15	62.19%	62%
Cannon	789	0.19%	0%	73	67.89%	67%
Carroll	1420	0.35%	0%	0	53.80%	72%
Carter	2411	0.59%	0%	0	76.78%	51%
Cheatham	2250	0.55%	0%	65	60.83%	68%
Chester	872	0.21%	0%	52	80.06%	43%
Claiborne	1761	0.43%	7%	5	48.79%	65%
Clay	331	0.08%	0%	61	70.13%	83%
Cocke	1975	0.49%	3%	0	73.64%	60%
Coffee	3501	0.86%	4%	71	49.20%	61%
Crockett	857	0.21%	21%	103	33.50%	69%
Cumberland	2681	0.66%	0%	109	64.13%	75%
Davidson	46175	11.38%	5%	9815	64.29%	69%
Decatur	616	0.15%	0%	0	77.22%	58%
DeKalb	1265	0.31%	0%	8	69.84%	49%
Dickson	3168	0.78%	0%	19	61.53%	68%
Dyer	2299	0.57%	0%	3	56.80%	70%
Fayette	1997	0.49%	0%	93	74.62%	67%
Fentress	1058	0.26%	0%	0	33.76%	60%
Franklin	2063	0.51%	0%	8	69.30%	58%
Gibson	3039	0.75%	0%	5	61.86%	62%
Giles	1854	0.46%	0%	12	78.64%	51%
Grainger	1141	0.28%	0%	0	83.25%	56%
Greene	3268	0.81%	0%	0	82.93%	71%
Grundy	771	0.19%	0%	3	71.84%	55%
Hamblen	3985	0.98%	0%	429	60.85%	75%
Hamilton	20865	5.14%	2%	1856	58.49%	69%
Hancock	351	0.09%	0%	0	72.05%	60%
Hardeman	1265	0.31%	0%	0	78.43%	62%
Hardin	1266	0.31%	0%	0	71.69%	73%
Hawkins	2654	0.65%	0%	45	74.98%	68%
Haywood	1028	0.25%	0%	0	69.98%	79%
Henderson	1677	0.41%	5%	30	72.18%	57%
Henry	1643	0.40%	0%	20	60.37%	63%
Hickman	1304	0.32%	0%	0	63.49%	62%
Houston	395	0.10%	0%	0	68.70%	57%
Humphreys	968	0.24%	0%	12	86.42%	41%

Jackson	512	0.13%	0%	0	73.33%	78%
Jefferson	2546	0.63%	3%	54	62.50%	59%
Johnson	723	0.18%	0%	101	77.57%	52%
Knox	26620	6.56%	2%	1318	58.40%	63%
Lake	346	0.09%	16%	0	56.47%	76%
Lauderdale	1440	0.35%	0%	26	66.88%	66%
Lawrence	2813	0.69%	0%	405	50.17%	61%
Lewis	670	0.17%	0%	0	88.89%	63%
Lincoln	1995	0.49%	0%	29	62.32%	69%
Loudon	2628	0.65%	4%	215	63.58%	54%
Macon	1736	0.43%	0%	0	58.20%	76%
Madison	6028	1.49%	8%	459	53.53%	70%
Marion	1610	0.40%	0%	16	59.50%	62%
Marshall	1939	0.48%	0%	341	72.78%	70%
Mauzy	6532	1.61%	0%	162	55.62%	70%
McMinn	2915	0.72%	6%	182	76.05%	66%
McNairy	1378	0.34%	25%	66	70.70%	52%
Meigs	665	0.16%	0%	0	79.11%	59%
Monroe	2408	0.59%	7%	23	81.32%	69%
Montgomery	17649	4.35%	5%	681	71.25%	55%
Moore	348	0.09%	0%	0	72.92%	33%
Morgan	1019	0.25%	0%	15	62.94%	79%
Obion	1735	0.43%	0%	29	73.91%	71%
Overton	1177	0.29%	0%	54	63.25%	76%
Perry	532	0.13%	0%	0	43.87%	37%
Pickett	200	0.05%	0%	0	83.33%	76%
Polk	826	0.20%	4%	2	80.95%	75%
Putnam	4447	1.10%	0%	233	67.87%	62%
Rhea	2064	0.51%	0%	158	85.58%	50%
Roane	2264	0.56%	0%	0	88.38%	56%
Robertson	4456	1.10%	1%	218	64.62%	58%
Rutherford	21410	5.28%	1%	1903	58.73%	64%

¹⁴³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from table S0101.

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from table S0601.

¹⁴⁵ Calculated using raw data from American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates in table S1601.

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from table S1410.

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from table B23008.

Scott	1312	0.32%	0%	0	78.34%	57%
Sequatchie	800	0.20%	0%	55	80.11%	42%
Sevier	5281	1.30%	0%	858	73.10%	59%
Shelby	63949	15.76%	2%	3974	58.07%	69%
Smith	1120	0.28%	0%	20	63.16%	66%
Stewart	807	0.20%	0%	0	78.74%	65%
Sullivan	7566	1.86%	3%	50	65.98%	69%
Sumner	11438	2.82%	5%	634	61.74%	64%
Tipton	3510	0.86%	3%	40	63.76%	69%
Trousdale	720	0.18%	32%	0	75.30%	55%
Unicoi	668	0.16%	0%	0	65.78%	58%
Union	999	0.25%	0%	0	63.29%	47%
Van.Buren	344	0.08%	0%	53	30.53%	45%
Warren	2420	0.60%	2%	91	69.02%	55%
Washington	6354	1.57%	0%	395	73.91%	60%
Wayne	766	0.19%	0%	0	75.00%	45%
Weakley	1593	0.39%	2%	35	64.97%	55%
White	1586	0.39%	6%	66	77.47%	63%
Williamson	13877	3.42%	4%	493	34.32%	61%
Wilson	8587	2.12%	3%	478	50.19%	73%
Tennessee	405867	N/A	2.6%	28153	62.11%	65%

Appendix B

Tennessee counties ECCE program accessibility and race/ethnicity percentages for children under 5^{148 149}

County	Rural/ Urban/ Suburban	% ECCE seat coverage (baseline)	% ECCE seat coverage (age- adjusted)	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Below Poverty
Anderson	Suburban	101%	41%	84%	1%	6%	16%
Bedford	Rural	75%	28%	67%	2%	26%	17%
Benton	Rural	49%	30%	95%	3%	0%	33%
Bledsoe	Rural	86%	55%	94%	3%	0%	32%
Blount	Suburban	79%	37%	90%	1%	8%	13%
Bradley	Urban	47%	33%	84%	5%	14%	23%
Campbell	Rural	32%	19%	92%	0%	1%	29%

¹⁴⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from tables S0101, B01001A, B01001B

¹⁴⁹ Tennessee State Government. (n.d.). *Tennessee Childcare Agency Website List Readme File Information*. Tennessee Dept. of Human Services. [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Agency%20Website%20List%20README%2021-18.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/Agency%20Website%20List%20README%202021-18.pdf)

Cannon	Rural	46%	21%	97%	0%	3%	21%
Carroll	Rural	54%	36%	89%	1%	1%	20%
Carter	Suburban	123%	32%	95%	3%	4%	21%
Cheatham	Rural	83%	44%	90%	1%	7%	15%
Chester	Rural	40%	18%	83%	5%	4%	15%
Claiborne	Rural	77%	29%	87%	2%	6%	35%
Clay	Rural	40%	35%	100%	0%	0%	23%
Cocke	Rural	69%	32%	84%	4%	10%	41%
Coffee	Rural	59%	35%	87%	0%	10%	21%
Crockett	Rural	84%	38%	68%	12%	19%	31%
Cumberland	Rural	39%	33%	95%	0%	7%	22%
Davidson	Urban	70%	43%	53%	26%	19%	20%
Decatur	Rural	79%	26%	84%	4%	8%	27%
DeKalb	Rural	44%	23%	75%	3%	18%	38%
Dickson	Rural	61%	33%	90%	4%	8%	11%
Dyer	Rural	69%	35%	71%	16%	5%	16%
Fayette	Rural	53%	33%	59%	28%	5%	27%

Fentress	Rural	36%	33%	89%	0%	10%	21%
Franklin	Rural	43%	26%	86%	1%	4%	22%
Gibson	Rural	68%	37%	70%	11%	4%	25%
Giles	Rural	63%	31%	74%	11%	15%	21%
Grainger	Rural	28%	16%	92%	0%	4%	31%
Greene	Rural	54%	37%	92%	1%	7%	23%
Grundy	Rural	122%	33%	73%	0%	2%	20%
Hamblen	Urban	65%	35%	76%	3%	25%	35%
Hamilton	Urban	90%	53%	65%	20%	14%	21%
Hancock	Rural	47%	47%	98%	0%	2%	60%
Hardeman	Rural	39%	30%	48%	48%	4%	18%
Hardin	Rural	36%	30%	97%	0%	6%	27%
Hawkins	Suburban	46%	22%	94%	2%	1%	31%
Haywood	Rural	76%	46%	37%	53%	12%	46%
Henderson	Rural	48%	33%	78%	1%	11%	12%
Henry	Rural	94%	39%	83%	4%	5%	23%
Hickman	Rural	35%	21%	99%	0%	9%	10%

Houston	Rural	36%	35%	92%	0%	0%	23%
Humphreys	Rural	56%	33%	82%	0%	2%	12%
Jackson	Rural	44%	36%	90%	0%	4%	30%
Jefferson	Rural	56%	19%	91%	0%	8%	15%
Johnson	Suburban	101%	32%	95%	0%	4%	36%
Knox	Urban	85%	43%	77%	9%	9%	17%
Lake	Rural	28%	28%	50%	32%	1%	52%
Lauderdale	Rural	40%	31%	58%	36%	5%	22%
Lawrence	Rural	49%	28%	90%	4%	3%	26%
Lewis	Rural	65%	34%	96%	1%	0%	35%
Lincoln	Rural	61%	31%	83%	7%	13%	17%
Loudon	Suburban	65%	29%	87%	3%	21%	23%
Macon	Rural	27%	18%	99%	0%	15%	26%
Madison	Urban	76%	48%	45%	42%	8%	34%
Marion	Rural	33%	32%	93%	2%	10%	18%
Marshall	Rural	44%	19%	83%	4%	4%	17%
Mauy	Rural	43%	26%	73%	10%	11%	17%

McMinn	Rural	50%	33%	79%	6%	8%	26%
McNairy	Rural	16%	21%	87%	4%	5%	21%
Meigs	Rural	41%	18%	93%	0%	9%	29%
Monroe	Rural	43%	18%	95%	1%	7%	20%
Montgomery	Urban	59%	31%	61%	15%	15%	14%
Moore	Rural	41%	24%	77%	0%	0%	4%
Morgan	Rural	31%	28%	98%	0%	1%	28%
Obion	Rural	130%	54%	68%	15%	11%	21%
Overton	Rural	96%	27%	96%	1%	3%	17%
Perry	Rural	21%	18%	94%	0%	4%	20%
Pickett	Rural	54%	26%	100%	0%	0%	24%
Polk	Rural	58%	17%	97%	0%	4%	20%
Putnam	Rural	116%	51%	88%	3%	14%	21%
Rhea	Rural	26%	25%	80%	4%	10%	28%
Roane	Rural	142%	40%	93%	0%	5%	19%
Robertson	Suburban	67%	39%	76%	6%	15%	26%
Rutherford	Urban	81%	40%	66%	14%	15%	13%

Scott	Rural	78%	36%	97%	0%	1%	26%
Sequatchie	Rural	56%	39%	92%	0%	7%	58%
Sevier	Rural	59%	29%	89%	0%	16%	23%
Shelby	Suburban	86%	48%	28%	56%	13%	32%
Smith	Rural	32%	24%	88%	1%	4%	20%
Stewart	Rural	46%	23%	81%	0%	3%	21%
Sullivan	Urban	74%	37%	90%	1%	4%	26%
Sumner	Suburban	76%	38%	78%	9%	10%	17%
Tipton	Rural	70%	33%	72%	20%	2%	17%
Trousdale	Rural	51%	19%	65%	5%	18%	11%
Unicoi	Rural	53%	42%	99%	0%	0%	33%
Union	Urban	32%	19%	98%	0%	0%	29%
Van Buren	Rural	68%	27%	93%	0%	0%	10%
Warren	Rural	35%	26%	87%	3%	15%	31%
Washington	Urban	75%	39%	85%	4%	8%	23%
Wayne	Rural	41%	25%	81%	17%	1%	43%
Weakley	Rural	73%	42%	81%	9%	5%	34%

White	Rural	29%	26%	92%	1%	4%	20%
Williamson	Urban	107%	64%	81%	3%	7%	4%
Wilson	Suburban	93%	49%	80%	6%	8%	10%

Appendix C

The PDG Preschool Commission

To ensure the successful development and implementation of the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, the Tennessee Department of Education recognizes the importance of bringing together a diverse range of voices from the ECCE ecosystem as an advisory body.

The chart below identifies stakeholders that will be involved in the assessment, planning, and implementation of Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan grant proposal-related activities.

Stakeholder Group	Interest	Contact Name	Position
Department of Education: Chair		Commissioner Lizzette Reynolds	Commissioner, Chair
Legislature	Workforce, governance, quality, family choice	Senator Ferrell Haile	Legislative body
Department of Education	Governance, Quality, Kindergarten transition, family supports, IDEA part B, mixed delivery, CCTE, multi-language learners, curriculum, coaching, child outcomes, program standards, data collection	Misty Moody	Assistant Commissioner of Early Learning
Department of Human Services	Governance, Workforce, CCDF, TANF, Wages, program standards, data collection	Jude White	Assistant Commissioner of Child/Adult Care Licensing
Department of Health	Family support/resources,	Dr. Tobi Amosun	Assistant Commissioner of

	home visiting, Medicaid, Title V Maternal and Health, WIC		Family Health and Wellness
Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	In-home support for b- 3 children with disabilities (Part C: TEIS)	Kelly Hyde	Assistant Commissioner, TEIS
Department of Workforce and Labor Development	Adult education, employee recruitment, labor force statistics	Denice Thomas	
Department of Children's Services		Carla Aaron	Deputy Commissioner Child Safety
TN Board of Regents	CDA and AA programs in early childhood	Dr. Jothany Reed	Vice Chancellor
Tennessee Youth Child Wellness Council (TYCWC)	Early Childhood Systems building, governance	Rob Burke	Director
Head Start/Early Head Start	Early childhood programs and family support, homelessness	Henri Murphy	State Collaboration Director
TDOE Voluntary Pre- K		Jessica Franklin	VPK Director
TDOE IDEA 619		Shelby Ritter	Director of early childhood SPED
Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R)	Early childhood professional development/resources for teachers, cross sector professional development	Heather Hicks	Director TN CCR&R

Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA)	CDA programs, professional development, cross sector professional development	Belva Weathersby	Statewide Program Director
Community-based Organizations	Mixed-delivery model, family and community engagement, partnership opportunities	Brian Mclaughin	COO YMCA, Midstate
Shared Service Programs	Out of school time ECCE models	Katie Harbison	Chambliss Center, President
Advocate Partners	Legislative changes for funding opportunities and governance structure	Blair Taylor	TQEE
Business Partners, including Chambers of commerce	Adult education, employee recruitment, labor force statistics, economic competitiveness	Amy Doran	Ballad Health (Former VPK Director)
Association of Infant Mental Health in Tennessee (AIMHiTN)	Infant mental health	Angela Webster	Chief Executive Officer
Tennessee Association for Children's Early Education	B-5 advocacy	Cathy Waggoner	President TACEE, Senior Vice President
Childcare Programs	B-5 care both home and center based, workforce	Karen Harrell	Porter Leath

	development, mixed delivery models		
Non-public school early childhood representation	B-5 care in non-public setting, workforce development, mixed delivery models	Randy Scallions	TACS Executive Director
Families	Workforce development, K-ready, quality, accessibility, affordability, full day/full year programs		
Public school early childhood programs	B-5 care in public setting, state-funded preschool, workforce development, mixed delivery models, LEAs	Jamie Hubbard	Rutherford County VPK director
TN Voices	B-8 no-cost mental health consultation and training	Katherine Bell	Early Childhood Director
Telamon	Head Start and family supports for migrant and seasonal workers, transition resources	Jennifer Havens	Head Start
Urban Child Institute	B-5 education and health	Katy Spurlock	Deputy Director
First8 Memphis		Gwendy Williams	Director of Operations

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