



## Pro-Life Safety Net Support for the First Thousand Days After Birth

### State Spotlight: Tennessee

*Information current as of December 2025.*

## 1. Care Coordination and Pregnancy Support

### 1.1 Pregnancy Support

#### Tennessee Strong Families Grant Program

This is Tennessee's Alternatives to Abortion program that dedicates annual funding to promote healthcare access and material resources for moms and babies. Funds go to pregnancy centers and other local nonprofits. Supported services could include medical and mental health care, housing assistance, adoption support, workforce assistance, and wraparound support.

### 1.2 Care Coordination

#### Community Health Access and Navigation in TN (CHANT)

Administered through local health departments, CHANT provides care coordination to pregnant and postpartum women and children and adolescents ages 0-21. The program helps families navigate the public benefits system and connects them with needed resources, referrals, and help with medical costs.

#### Kidcentral TN

This is a centralized digital location (online directory) for Tennessee families to find information on state services related to health, education, and child development.

### 1.3 Miscellaneous

#### Fatherhood Grant Program

The Tennessee Department of Human Services has launched a Fatherhood Grant Program to support and empower families. It has three tiers:

- Tier 1 – grants that go directly to fatherhood programs that provide parenting classes, father-child activities, peer support groups, mentorship programs, legal support, and wraparound services.
- Tier 2 – grants that go to organizations that specifically message and communicate the important role that fathers play in society and in their children’s lives.
- Tier 3 – grants that go to organizations that do research on the importance of fatherhood.

## 2. Women’s Health

### 2.1 *Prenatal and Postpartum Medical Care*

#### Family Planning

Family planning services are available in all 95 Tennessee counties through local health departments and via telehealth. Services include basic infertility services, preconception counseling and education, STI screening and treatment, contraception, and pregnancy testing. Services are provided on a sliding fee scale, and no one is turned away due to inability to pay.

### 2.2 *Prenatal and Postpartum Support*

#### Breastfeeding in Tennessee

Tennessee law protects women’s right to breastfeed. The Tennessee Department of Health has created a landing page to promote breastfeeding and support moms. Resources include a 24-hour [breastfeeding hotline](#) to connect nursing mothers with board-certified lactation consultants and a [directory](#) of businesses that have pledged to support and welcome breastfeeding mothers and families. Additionally, WIC (federal) provides increased support for breastfeeding moms, and all health departments and WIC clinics in Tennessee have a [Designated Breastfeeding Expert](#). The WIC [Breastfeeding Peer Counselor](#) program is available in 32 counties in Tennessee.

- [TennCare Lactation Benefit](#) - Lactation consultation services are covered under TennCare Medicaid and CoverKid (CHIP, see section 7.2) plans.

#### Evidence-Based Home Visiting (EBHV) Program

The Tennessee Department of Health governs EBHV services in all 95 Tennessee counties. Funding for the program is provided through a combination of federal funding and state appropriations and funding (Healthy Start, Nurse Home Visitor, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)). Families participate voluntarily. Programs are targeted towards certain vulnerable groups including low-income families, pregnant women under 21, families with interaction with child welfare services, children with developmental disabilities, and families with substance use problems. There are three evidence-based home visiting models in Tennessee.

- [Nurse-Family Partnership \(NFP\)](#): NFP serves low-income first-time moms. Participants are partnered with a registered nurse and receive regular home visits until their child turns two. The program is active in 11 counties through partnerships with East Tennessee State University, Erlanger Health System, and Le Bonheur

Children's Hospital. Applicants must be first-time moms in their 28<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy or less who meet income limits.

- [Healthy Families Tennessee](#): Healthy Families America (the Tennessee version) builds relationships with participating families and evaluates their needs. The program provides regular home visits, usually for a three-year minimum, to reduce child abuse and neglect. Families who are pregnant or parenting a baby less than three months old can enroll, and participation is voluntary. Eligibility is determined by the [local HFA site](#).
- [Parents As Teachers \(PAT\)](#): PAT promotes child development and learning by equipping caregivers with regular home visits, group meetings, health screenings for kids, and family resources. Families are [eligible](#) from pregnancy until the child's fifth birthday. Eligibility is determined by each PAT affiliate.

### [Child Health and Development Program \(CHAD\)](#)

CHAD is a voluntary home-visiting program for pregnant moms and families with young children who are at risk of abuse or neglect or who have a developmental delay. Prenatal care is available for pregnant girls under 18 years old. Services are administered through [local health departments](#). To be eligible, families must either meet financial requirements or have been involved with the Child Protective Services system.

## **2.3 General Medical Care for Women**

### [Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program \(BCCSP\)](#)

The Tennessee BCCSP provides eligible individuals with timely access to breast and cervical screening and diagnostic services. It is available in all 95 counties. To be eligible one must meet all the following criteria:

- Be a Tennessee resident
- Have an income at or below 250% of the FPL)
- Be uninsured or underinsured (do not have coverage for breast and cervical screening or diagnostics)
- Meet age requirements for breast and cervical cancer screening (40+)
- Meet age requirements for breast or cervical diagnostics (18+)

### [Project Rural Recovery](#)

This program uses four mobile clinics to provide physical and mental health services in rural, underserved areas. Such services are free and available to all Tennessee residents.

### [Medicaid](#)

Medicaid in Tennessee provides health coverage to eligible Tennessee residents who meet the income guidelines and are U.S. citizens or have satisfactory immigration status. There are various Medicaid programs available in Tennessee for individuals and families, each with their own additional requirements. Below are [several groups](#) that are eligible for Tennessee Medicaid. Information on income limits can be found [here](#).

- Pregnant women: Pregnant women are eligible for full-coverage Medicaid if they meet certain family size and income limits (at or below 255% of the FPL) as well as citizenship and residency requirements.<sup>1</sup> [In April 2022](#), as a result of a change in the federal law, Tennessee Medicaid extended postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months. [HB 1545](#), signed into law in 2023, appropriated funds to cover the postpartum expansion of Medicaid in Tennessee. The passage of [SB 0394](#) in 2023 required that doula services offered by Department of Health certified individuals be made available to Medicaid recipients. [On January 1, 2024](#), Tennessee Medicaid's income threshold for pregnant women was increased from 195% to 250% of the FPL (255% with the 5% federal disregard applied).
  - o If pregnant Tennessee residents meet all of the Medicaid eligibility criteria for the pregnant women eligibility category except the citizenship requirement, they may be eligible for [CoverKids](#) (a program providing health insurance for eligible children up to 18 years old and eligible pregnant women). The income limit for CoverKids is the same for pregnant women as it is for traditional Tennessee Medicaid. Furthermore, women who have private insurance that doesn't cover maternity health benefits but meet other CoverKids eligibility requirements can apply for coverage as well.
- Parents and caretakers: Parents with children living in the home who also meet resident, citizenship, and income requirements (at or below 105% of the FPL) are eligible for full-coverage Medicaid.<sup>2</sup> The income threshold for this eligibility category was [increased](#) to 100% of the FPL (+5% disregard) in 2024.
- BCCSP enrollees: Those who received cancer diagnoses through the Tennessee BCCSP receive full coverage Medicaid if their income is at or below 250% of the FPL.

For those who would qualify for one of the above groups except for their immigration status, Tennessee Medicaid covers emergency services only.

See section 6.1 for more information on disability-specific Medicaid programs, section 7.2 for child-specific Medicaid programs, section 7.4 for adoption-specific Medicaid programs, and 7.5 for foster care-specific programs.

## 3. Finances, Work, and Education

### 3.1 Help Paying Bills

No applicable and/or known programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The 5% difference between the stated income limits for different eligibility groups within the Tennessee webpage linked above and the amount listed in this document is because the Tennessee source didn't account for the 5% disregard that applies to Medicaid eligibility groups.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## *3.2 Employment Support*

### Employment and Training (E&T)

This program helps SNAP participants become self-sufficient through funded education, skills training, and employment support services. Goods and services provided include tuition and training services, textbooks, uniforms, tools and supplies, transportation and childcare assistance, job training services, and job retention services. Eligibility requirements for SNAP recipients seeking E&T services include meeting all the following requirements:

- Being at least 16 years old
- Not receiving TANF cash assistance
- Being willing and able to work upon program completion

## *3.3 Education and Training*

No applicable and/or known programs.

## *3.4 Financial Advice or Education*

### Families First

Families First is the state's TANF program. It is focused on making participating Tennessee residents self-sufficient by providing temporary cash assistance, transportation, childcare assistance, educational support, and job training to those who meet financial eligibility standards. To receive these benefits, enrollees must agree to follow a personal responsibility plan which entails keeping up to date with their children's immunizations and health checks, academic needs, and working at least 30 hours a week (or being in school for 30+ hours/week). This program is also available in child-only cases in which a child lives with a relative who is not their parent and only the child receives benefits.

## *4. Material or Legal Support*

### *4.1 Transportation*

#### Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Benefit (NEMT)

TennCare provides rides to covered services for members without transportation. Rides must be scheduled 72 hours in advance. TennCare members who have access to a vehicle or who have family or friends who can drive them can be reimbursed for mileage to covered services.

#### Public Transit Services

Public transit is available in every county. In rural counties, transportation is provided by regional Human Resources Agencies, with base fares starting around \$5. Rides must be scheduled in advance.

## Families First/TANF Transportation

In Tennessee, TANF funds may be used to cover transportation as part of participants' personal responsibility plans, as long as community options are exhausted first.

## *4.2 Food and Nutrition*

### WIC

This program is funded by the federal government but run by the state. It provides healthy foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and their children (up to age 5) who are at nutritional risk. Other eligibility requirements include meeting the following two criteria:

- Meeting [income guidelines](#)
- Residing in Tennessee

If families are enrolled in other Tennessee benefit programs such as SNAP, TANF, or Medicaid they are automatically income eligible for WIC.

### SNAP

This program is funded by the federal government but run by the state. It provides supplemental assistance to low-income Tennessee families' monthly food budgets. Eligibility tests for SNAP in Tennessee include gross income, net income, and asset tests.

### Special Nutrition Programs

#### National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs for Tennessee

These federally funded programs are run by the state and provide needy children with free or reduced-cost breakfast and lunches at participating schools.

- [After School Snack Program](#): This is a federally funded program that provides public and private schools as well as childcare institutions with subsidized snacks for after school programs. The snacks are provided for free or at a reduced cost for eligible children.
- [Seamless Summer Feeding Option](#): This program provides free meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks) to qualified low-income areas during summer vacations or school vacations greater than 10 days. This program is only available through school systems that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast programs. Service sites are located within school districts that qualify at 50% or greater children eligible for free and reduced cost meals.

#### Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

This federally funded program is run by the state and provides reimbursable meals to childcare centers that take care of children under 13 years of age or adults with disabilities.

#### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP is a federally funded program that provides states with 100% American grown foods which are allocated to participating food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens. Low-income individuals and families can then go and receive supplemental food boxes from these locations. These supplemental food boxes contain three to five days' worth of food. Monthly income limits apply.

### *4.3 Clothing, Household Goods, and Baby Supplies*

#### Infant Safe Sleep Program

This program distributes educational materials and portable cribs to those in need to promote infants being placed alone, on their back, and in a crib.

#### Diaper TennCare Benefit

This benefit provides up to 100 diapers (Huggies, Cuties, or Pampers) per month, free of charge, for children under the age of two who are enrolled in TennCare or CoverKids. Diapers can be picked up at participating pharmacies.

### *4.4 Housing, Shelters, and Maternity Homes*

#### Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

This is a federally funded program run by the state. It provides a one-time heating or cooling utility payment to homeowners or renters within the federal poverty guidelines.

#### Weatherization Assistance Program

This is a federally funded program run by the Tennessee Housing Development Agency. The program helps low-income individuals and families save money on their utility bills by weatherizing their homes to conserve energy. To be eligible, an applicant must own the home being updated or must receive approval from the landlord. Home health and safety impacts qualification for this program.

#### Emergency Repair Program

This program provides repairs to an essential system or component of a qualifying, low-income elderly or disabled resident's home that otherwise would pose a threat to their life, safety, or health. Eligible repairs include roofs, electrical systems, plumbing and/or sanitation/septic systems, heating and/or air conditioning systems, floors and walls, window/door replacements, and accessibility improvements.

### *4.5 Legal Support*

No applicable and/or known programs.

### *4.6 Miscellaneous*

No applicable and/or known programs.

## 5. Recovery and Mental Health

### 5.1 Addiction Recovery

#### Tennessee REDLINE

This is a statewide phone/text referral service to addiction treatment provided by the Tennessee Association for Alcohol, Drug, and Other Addiction Services through a contract with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Anyone in the state can call or text **800-889-9789** for referral services.

#### Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program

The Department of Health implements the CDC's evidence-based strategies to reduce tobacco use in the state. This is a multi-sector effort that focuses on creating partnerships between the public and private sectors as well as the youth in the state to help Tennessee residents stop smoking or chewing tobacco.

#### QuitLine

This is a statewide, toll-free telephone service that provides personalized support for Tennesseans who want to quit smoking or chewing tobacco.

#### Growing Inside Free of Tobacco and Smoking (GIFTS)

This is Tennessee's pregnancy smoking cessation program. It is a referral-based program that helps pregnant women quit smoking/chewing tobacco. Local health departments refer pregnant women to the program and participants attend four prenatal smoking cessation sessions. Participants receive diaper or baby wipes vouchers for each session that they test smoke free. A smoker who lives with an enrolled pregnant participant can also participate in the program and earn extra vouchers.

#### PATH Program

This is a federally and state-funded outreach program in which PATH workers reach out to homeless adults with mental illness, substance abuse, or trauma and offer them resources as well as housing, treatment, and recovery services.

### 5.2 Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Trafficking Recovery

No applicable and/or known programs.

### 5.3 Mental Health

#### Mental Health Crisis Services

These services include a statewide emergency crisis hotline and crisis walk-in centers across Tennessee, which provide mental health assessments, referrals, and follow-up services.

### Treatment for Pregnant Women Abusing Substances

This is an income-based program that prioritizes the treatment of pregnant drug/substance users at licensed treatment agencies where they participate in medically monitored withdrawal and received treatment and recovery support services.

### Women's Recovery and Treatment

This is a program for non-pregnant women with children, pregnant women, or women seeking to regain custody of their children who have a substance abuse disorder and/or a psychiatric disorder. It provides participants with residential housing, intensive outpatient case management, recovery services, parenting classes, and childcare and transportation services.

### In-Home Help for Mothers and Babies

This is a home visiting program for new mothers or pregnant women who have a mental illness and/or substance disorder. Participants receive 24 home visits a year from registered nurses until the child turns two years old. Registered nurses perform health exams; provide women with education and parenting skills; and provide women with strategies to prevent infant mortality, child abuse, and alcohol and drug misuse. It is available in ten counties.

### Planned Respite Program

This is a program that helps caregivers of children with serious mental/emotional disorders get respite care (train people to take care of their children) to give parents breaks from being 24/7 caretakers. This program is for families with children ages two to 15 and the program lasts three months. It is available in eight counties.

### System of Care Across Tennessee

This is a statewide initiative that helps parents of children with serious emotional disturbances implement strategies to help care for their children. The initiative creates interagency teams in all 95 Tennessee counties to ensure a statewide system of care for all families in need and provides parents with a wraparound approach to care for families. To be eligible for this program families must meet all the following criteria:

- Have a child between the ages of 0-21 who is experiencing emotional or behavioral issues that affect their daily life
- Have a child who is having difficulty or is at risk of being kicked out of school, childcare, house, etc.
- Have a child who has been, is currently, or is at risk of psychiatric hospitalization, residential placement, or DCS custody
- Be willing and interested in participating (if under 16, includes family)

### **5.4 Abortion Recovery and Healing**

No applicable and/or known programs.

## 5.5 Miscellaneous

### Behavioral Health Safety Net

This is a program for families with children three or older who have a qualifying mental health diagnosis and no insurance that covers behavioral health services. Financial assistance covers assessment, diagnostic, treatment, transportation, and case management services.

## 6. Disability Assistance

### Vocational Rehabilitation

The Tennessee Department of Health Services has a vocational rehabilitation services division that helps disabled Tennessee residents (including middle and high schoolers) find jobs to give these residents independence.

### Children's Special Services Program

This is the state's Title V program for children (birth to 21 years old) with physical disabilities. It connects children and their families with medical care and is available in all 95 Tennessee counties. Services include evaluation, hospitalization, and rehabilitative services as well as speech, language, physical and occupational therapy. Artificial limbs/braces, special formula/food, wheelchairs, and other durable medical equipment can also be provided. To be eligible for this program, families' income must be at or below 225% of the FPL.

### Tennessee Early Intervention System

This program offers free therapy services to families of children with developmental delays or disabilities. The goal of early intervention is to diagnose and start treating the child's delay/disability as early as possible so that they can attend kindergarten. To be eligible, children must meet one of the following requirements:

- Have a [verified diagnosis](#) from child's doctor and the results of a developmental evaluation
- Meet the [premature infant criteria](#)

### Disability-Specific Medicaid Programs

Tennessee Medicaid offers Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers to individuals who require full, comprehensive coverage and additional long-term support services that allow disabled individuals to live at home instead of in a long-term care facility. Tennessee HCBS waivers [include](#):

- TN Comprehensive Aggregate Cap Home and Community Based Services (CAC) Waiver: This waiver is for those of any age with an intellectual disability that need an ICF/IID level of care. Examples of covered services include employment support, home health care services, and transportation services.
- TN Self-Determination Waiver Program: This waiver is for those of any age with an intellectual disability and children zero through five years old with a developmental

disability that meets an ICF/IID level of care. Examples of covered services include dental services, home modifications, and the provision of specialized medical equipment.

- TN Statewide Home and Community Based Services Waiver: This waiver is for those of any age with an intellectual disability and children zero through five years old with a developmental disability that meets an ICF/IID level of care. Examples of covered services include family counseling, physical therapy, and nutrition services.

Aged, blind, and disabled adults not enrolled in these waivers can also receive full Medicaid through the state's Medicaid program if their income meets Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit rate limits. Those who are employed but disabled and have an income at or below 250% of the FPL are also eligible for full-coverage Medicaid in Tennessee.

Another disability-specific Medicaid program covered by Tennessee's Medicaid program is the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA) program, otherwise known as the Katie Beckett program (Chapter 305). This program is for children 18 years old and younger with disabilities who want to live at home but qualify for institutional placement in a hospital or intermediate care facility. The program provides full Medicaid coverage and additional program-specific services. The income limit for this program is three times the current federal benefits rate, and there are additional resource limits. In some instances, families will pay a monthly premium, and in others, TEFRA will pay for the full cost of the services provided. Some services covered by this program include physical, occupational, and speech therapy, outpatient behavioral health counseling, nursing services, etc.

## 7. Care for Children

### 7.1 Childcare

#### Child Care Certificate Program

This program provides childcare assistance for families participating in the state's TANF program, parents transitioning off TANF benefits, working parents or those enrolled in school, teen parents, and children in foster care. Eligibility is determined by the Department of Human Services or by the Department of Children's services for children in foster care. There are different subprograms within this subsidized childcare program, including:

- Families First program: A program that provides childcare assistance to those on TANF who complete their approved activity on their Personal Responsibility Plan.
- Transitional Child Care program: A program that provides childcare assistance for families for 18 months following their final allotment of TANF benefits.
- At-Risk Child Care program: A program that provides childcare assistance to guardians (grandparents, aunts, or uncles) in TANF child-only cases that are working and/or in school for at least 30 hours per week.
- Smart Steps Child Care program: A program that provides childcare assistance to income-eligible families who are working or enrolled in post-secondary education from the time the child is six weeks old until they are in kindergarten.

- Teen Parent Child Care program: A program that provides child care assistance to income-eligible teen parents who are in high school even if the teens are living at home with their parents.
- SNAP Employment and Training Child Care program: A program that provides child care assistance to those enrolled in the SNAP Employment and Training program.
- TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Child Care Payment Assistance program: A program that provides child care assistance to parents enrolled in designated treatment programs through the TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.
- Re-Employment Child Care Payment Assistance program: A program that provides child care assistance to parents enrolled in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program through the TN Department of Labor and Workforce. This is a referral-based subprogram and the parents' household income must be below the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of state median income.

### Extended Learning and Afterschool Programs

The Tennessee Department of Education provides funding for two different extended learning programs for working parents to have childcare after school for their children: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers and Lottery for Education Afterschool Programs. School districts, community-based organizations, faith-based groups and other public or private organizations can apply for 21<sup>st</sup> Century CLC funding. These after-school programs must focus on academic enrichment, literacy education, healthy lifestyles, and cultural programs. Funding is prioritized for programs that serve mainly low-income students. The Lottery for Education Afterschool Programs mainly focus on providing enrollees academic enrichment opportunities that complement their regular academic studies and providing sports/leisure opportunities. The Lottery for Education programs serve those who are five through 18 years old and who are enrolled in elementary or secondary school. Fifty percent of students must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Qualify for free/reduced lunch
- Be at risk of educational disadvantage because of familial circumstances of abuse, neglect, or disability
- Be at risk of state custody because of family issues
- Be enrolled in a public school and failing to make adequate yearly progress
- Be at risk of failing one or more subjects or are behind grade level by at least one year

### New Employer Workforce (NEW) Care Partnership Grants

This is a pilot partnership program initiated by the Tennessee Department of Human Services as a result of a [2023 legislative mandate](#). It provides grants to nonprofit organizations to partner with the state to make a new childcare agency or improve an existing one. The goal of this program is to create more licensed childcare slots for underserved populations by increasing the affordability of childcare through private partnerships.

## 7.2 Children's Health Care

### Newborn Screening

All infants born in Tennessee hospitals are screened through this program for preexisting, treatable but non-evident genetic conditions, hearing loss, and Critical Congenital Heart Disease. If diagnoses are made, the program can help connect parents with necessary services and resources for treatment for the child. It is important to note that while this program is required, parents pay for these services as a part of the cost to deliver their child. However, the state facilitates the program and provides payment options for low-income families.

### Medicaid for Children

Tennessee residents under 19 can qualify for full-coverage Medicaid if they meet the [citizenship or immigration requirements](#) as well as [income guidelines](#). The income of all people (such as a legal parent or stepparent) included in "family size" is counted. The income limit for children aged zero to one year old is at or below 200% of the FPL, at or below 147% for children aged one through five, and at or below 138% for children aged six through 18.<sup>3</sup>

Tennessee's Early Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment ([EPSDT](#)) benefit provides health coverage for well-child visits and diagnostic screenings for all children with actual or potential health issues, from birth to age 21, who are enrolled in Medicaid. This mandated Medicaid benefit screens children with actual or potential health problems to treat them before they become permanent disabilities. Preventive health services are also available to Medicaid-eligible children under age 21.

### CoverKids

This is Tennessee's CHIP program that provides health insurance coverage to children whose families make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to pay for private insurance. It is for children 18 years old and younger who don't have private insurance and are Tennessee residents and U.S. citizens. The income limit is at or below 255% of the FPL.

### Vaccines for Children Program

This is a federal program run at the state level that provides participating doctors' offices with free vaccines to administer to children whose families could not otherwise afford to vaccinate their children. Residents aged 18 or younger are eligible as long as they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Are American Indian or Alaska Native
- Are Medicaid-eligible
- Are uninsured
- Are underinsured

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## *7.3 Family and Parenting Education*

### Tennessee Head Start and Early Head Start

This is a federally funded program that coordinates with service sites to educate low-income parents of children aged birth to five on child development and school readiness. Head Start typically serves children between ages three and five, and Early Head Start serves infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. The program is free to low-income families at or below federal [poverty guidelines](#). Children whose families receive public assistance, who are in foster care, or are experiencing homelessness are also eligible regardless of income. The state's Head Start program is administered by the federally funded Tennessee Head Start Collaboration Office.

### Welcome Baby

The Tennessee Department of Health provides the family of every baby born in the state with a "Welcome Baby" book on parenting, child development, and resources. The book has now been developed into an app.

### Healthier Beginnings Program

This is a voluntary parenting support program for parents with young children or who are expecting (in their last trimester). Trained professionals perform home visits and answer parents' questions about their child's health and development and connect parents with resources. This program is available in 15 of Tennessee's 95 counties.

## *7.4 Adoption*

### Adoption Assistance

This program offers post-adoption services through the Harmony ASAP program. Examples of provided services include crisis intervention services and support groups. Other benefits included in this program include a one-time payment for expenses related to adoption and Medicaid eligibility for adopted children. This program is for adoptive families of special needs children and to help cover the additional costs of adopting special needs children. Examples of special needs children include those who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Those with moderate to severe medical, physical, or psychological conditions
- Those who spent three or more consecutive years in custody of the state of Tennessee
- Those who have experienced neglect or physical or sexual abuse which the state classifies as severe child abuse
- Those who meet the medical and disability requirements for Supplemental Security Income

## *7.5 Foster, Kinship, and Short-term Care*

### Relative Caregiver

This is a program for children living with relatives because they cannot live with their parents due to abuse, neglect, incarceration, or death. The program provides the children and their relatives with support services such as referrals to resources, access to support groups, and a monthly stipend

for family advocacy assistance through contracts with community-based agencies in each of the state's 12 health regions. Eligibility requirements for relative caregivers include meeting all the following requirements:

- Being related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption
- Having primary care of the child through informal family agreements or legal custody
- Not having the birth parents residing in their home
- Having a household income that exceeds twice the current FPL based on their family size

To get the monthly stipend, the relative caregiver must have a final custody order of the court, be 21 years of age or older, and agree to seek the establishment or enforcement of child support.

## Transition Services

One component of the state's foster care transition services is the [Independent Living program](#)., which provides funding as well as services related to education, housing, employment, transportation, life skills, financial education, and social and communication skills. Another component of the state's transition services is their [Extension of Foster Care Services](#) program. This program helps those who are 18 and leaving foster care by providing them with education and training vouchers for post-secondary education, a living allowance, access to life skills classes, and leadership opportunities.

## [Medicaid](#)

In Tennessee, children who are in foster care are eligible for Medicaid. Similarly, if a child [aged out](#) of foster care and was enrolled in Medicaid at the time of aging out, they are eligible for Medicaid until they turn 26 years old.

## 7.6 Safe Haven and/or Baby Boxes

### [Safe Haven Law](#)

The Tennessee Safe Haven law allows mothers of newborns to surrender their unharmed children to designated facilities (when staff are present at the facilities) within 45 days of birth without fear of prosecution. [Designated facilities include](#) hospitals, birthing centers, health departments, outpatient walk-in clinics, fire stations (24/7), emergency medical service facilities, and police stations (24/7).

## Miscellaneous

### [Choose Life License Plate Program](#)

Specialty plates saying "Choose Life" can be purchased from the Tennessee Department of Driver Services. Thirty-five dollars out of the \$61.50 total is donated to the Tennessee Right to Life Education fund which provides counseling and financial resources for women facing unexpected pregnancies. Tennessee Right to Life Education fund also uses the proceeds to coordinate statewide awareness campaigns and a toll-free helpline as well as reimburse social services providers who prepare adoptions in the state for at-risk women.

## ‘Tennessee: Leading the Nation’ Agenda

This was Governor Lee’s 2023 legislative agenda and budget. It focused on economic opportunity and tax relief, strong and healthy families, protecting Tennessee’s children, and a variety of other initiatives like great schools, safe neighborhoods, and a healthier environment. Applicable to this project are the Strong and Healthy Families Initiative and the Protecting Tennessee’s Children initiative. The Strong and Healthy Families Initiative allocated \$330 million via a TennCare waiver to help improve the health of mothers and infants in the most at-risk communities by making the cost of diapers free during the first two years of the baby’s life, expanding TennCare to an additional 8,100 parents a year, and establishing continuous health insurance coverage for children for at least a year post-birth, and many other actions. Under this initiative, \$20 million were also allocated to crisis pregnancy provider support grants and \$10.25 million for TN Fosters Hope grant funding to improve foster care and adoption in the state. Lastly, \$29 million was allocated to the expansion of programming for children with complex medical or emotional needs that are at risk of being placed in a foster or adoptive home by developing the state’s respite and long-term care programs. Funding for the Protecting Tennessee Children initiative focuses on improving the state’s foster care and adoption processes to make them more child-centered.

**This is a non-exhaustive list of programs, current as of January 2026, intended to make information easily accessible to moms and families. Program details are subject to change. Readers should always consult with the appropriate state agency for the most accurate and recent information. The information in this summary is for educational purposes only. CLI does not take a position on the merits of any specific program.**

*This document was compiled by Mia Steupert, Elyse Gaitan, and Tessa Cox.*