Tennessee Joint Task Force on Children's Justice/Child Sexual Abuse State Plan

2025

Prepared For

THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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Executive Summary

The Joint Task Force on Children's Justice and Child Sexual Abuse (JTF) was established in 1985 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The legislation mandated the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (TDCS) to form a task force dedicated to enhancing the state's response to child sexual abuse and other severe abuse cases—focusing on detection, intervention, prevention, and treatment. TDCS collaborates closely with the JTF, comprising child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health professionals, and representatives from various state child-serving agencies across Tennessee, who are appointed by the TDCS commissioner to fulfill this essential duty.

State Role and Purpose

The role of the JTF is to advise and assist child-serving agencies, including the following Tennessee departments:

- the Department of Children's Services (TDCS),
- the Department of Education (TDOE),
- the Department of Health (TDOH),
- the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), and
- the Department of Human Services (TDHS);

as well as child advocates, service providers, law enforcement, and the judiciary in fulfilling their responsibilities related to child protection and in responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect.

Purpose of the Report

This report provides an update to the governor and the general assembly regarding the achievements and progress made toward concerns identified in the 2023 Child Sexual Abuse State Report Plan. Additionally, it outlines an updated Plan of Action setting goals for the next two years. It also describes TDCS's ongoing collaboration with the JTF to improve the investigation, prevention, intervention, treatment, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases involving child abuse and neglect, with a particular focus on child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Descriptions of Relevant Committees and Accomplishments

The JTF meets quarterly under the leadership of :

- Lynne Farrar, Executive Director of Tennessee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Pat Wade, Retired Rehabilitation Dean for TDHS

and operates through several committees that focus on specialized areas within child welfare. These committees include:

- **Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT)**: Improves best practices and protocols for investigating child sexual abuse.
- **Court Improvement**: Enhances child welfare court proceedings, providing training on testifying and courtroom procedures.
- **Outreach and Awareness**: Increases public and professional awareness of child abuse indicators and prevention resources.
- **Mental Health/Treatment**: Focuses on mental health support, treatment guidelines, and best practices for children affected by abuse.

Selected Key Accomplishments by the Numbers - 2023 and 2024

- **1,057,043** individuals received public child abuse awareness or education through Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funded programs in FFY 2023.
- **429** CPIT members involved in child sexual abuse investigations attended workshops offered by TDCS in 2023, with **299** members participating in 2024.
- **2,441** foster parents completed trafficking/exploitation training in 2023, and **1,406** in 2024.
- **1,598** foster parents completed child sexual abuse/trauma-related training in 2023, and **1,135** in 2024.
- **17** sex trafficking presentations and public events reached over **4,600** attendees through TBI's Internet Crimes Against Children affiliates in 2023.
- **511** law enforcement personnel and **5,992** civilians received training on human trafficking from TBI in 2023.
- **357** professionals from CPIT, GALs, and other child welfare roles attended the Connecting for Children's Justice Conference.
- **7,129** adults completed evidence-based child sexual abuse training led by Stewards of Children facilitators in **467** sessions (Jan 2023 - Aug 2024).
- **28,843** educators, **1,053** TDOC personnel, **3,344** general public, and **288** foster parents & staff received sex trafficking training by Ancora TN.
- **30,848** child-care providers completed the "Recognizing and Responding to Suspected Child Sexual Abuse" course and **14,784** completed "Maltreatment/Mandated Reporting" from July 2023 - Aug 2024.
- **36,938** individuals completed TDCS Online Mandated Reporter Training in FY 2024.
- **2,223** school child abuse coordinators receive monthly updates and training information from TDCS.
- **15,930** completed TDCS online mandated reporter training in FY 2024.
- **4,333** sex abuse prevention materials were distributed to state child-serving agencies, nonprofits, and community partners in 2024.

2025 Child Sexual Abuse State Plan Goals

During its September 5, 2024 meeting, the JTF identified top priorities for the next two years. The JTF's top five priorities listed below involve multiyear tasks related to improving the investigation, prevention, intervention, treatment, prosecution, and judiciary handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

Goal 1	Improve the CPIT Team coordination and response to child sexual abuse and severe abuse cases.
Goal 2	Continue to build on the work done related to therapeutic practices for youth who have experienced CSE.
Goal 3	Identification/curation of resources on developmental sexual behavior, children with sexual behavior problems, problematic sexual behaviors in children and simplify information for various populations.
Goal 4	Determine the need for additional resources related to children with sexual behavior problems to inform TDCS and other child serving systems.
Goal 5	Continue to educate and inform the public, child care providers, schools, child welfare professional groups, law enforcement, health care organizations, and other groups about child welfare related resources and training opportunities.
Goal 6	Continue to improve the effectiveness of child welfare-related proceedings.

The JTF and TDCS will continue to work diligently to strengthen efforts in the detection, prevention, intervention, and treatment of those affected by child sexual abuse and severe abuse. For more information about the JTF's projects, committees, policies, and procedures, please visit their website at children.sworpswebapp.sworps.utk.edu

Introduction

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or any significantly older person. The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (TDCS) has adopted a definition of child sexual abuse that includes "any sexual acts involving a child under the age of 13 or was under the age of 13 when the abuse occurred, or a child is age 13 – 18 and meets the relationship criteria per the Department's policy."1 Child sexual abuse includes acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator involving the following:

- Explicit sexual acts;
- Vaginal, oral, anal or digital penetration with or without the use of an object;
- Touching, fondling, molestation or intentional contact with genitals, buttocks or breasts of child or perpetrator. This also includes when adolescents or adults instruct children to engage in such behaviors with each other;
- Indecent exposure and voyeurism; and
- Intentionally exposing a child to sexually explicit material.
- Any acts defined as sexual abuse by the Prison Rape elimination Act (PREA) [2]

Child sexual abuse also means sexual behaviors or situations in which the motivation may or may not be sexual, but there is a clear sexual component such as:

- Taking pictures or videos of children engaging in sexual activities or in sexually explicit poses.
- Making children available to others for sexual purposes.
- The sexual gratification or benefit of an adult.
- The solicitation of a minor by requesting or inviting a minor to engage in sexual activity, even if the solicitation did not result in a sexual act. The solicitating communication can include spoken words, electronic mail or internet services, and text or photo messages;
- Use of a child for prostitution; and
- Caregiver has knowledge or reasonable suspicion of child sexual abuse by another person and intentionally fails to intervene or protect child.
- Sexual harassment within congregate care facilities where youth are placed.

TDCS defines Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM) as the use of any person under the age of eighteen (18) as defined in, numbers one (1) and two (2) of this section in exchange for anything of value either directly or indirectly. Force, threat or coercion is not a factor for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM).

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[1] Tennessee Department of Children's Services https://files.dcs.tn.gov/policies/chap14/WA1.pdf
[2] Tennessee Department of Children's Services https://files.dcs.tn.gov/policies/chap14/WA1.pdf

For screening purposes, a report may be submitted for investigation of CSEM without direct allegations of Child Sexual Abuse as defined above when a reasonable suspicion of CSEM exists which may include one (1) or more of the below risk factors:

- Chronic Runaway;
- Large amounts of cash or prepaid cards;
- Dramatic increase of material possessions with no other explanation;
- Hotel keys, receipts, etc.;
- Older " boyfriend" or overtly concerned/controlling male OR FEMALE;
- Personal items don't reflect living situation;
- Multiple Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's);
- Unexplained injuries; and/or
- Significant change in behavior.

Scope of the Problem

Child sexual abuse is more prevalent than most Tennesseans would like to believe. It is widespread – children of all ages, races, and ethnicities experience child sexual abuse. Most experts believe that one in four American girls will be sexually abuse before her 18th birthday, and one in 13 American boys will experience the same. Unfortunately, there is good reason to expect that children in Tennessee be at the same high risk for sexual abuse.

National Statistics indicate:

- Children are most vulnerable to child sexual abuse between the ages of 7 and 13.
- About 90% of child sexual abuse victim's perpetrator is someone known and trusted by the child or child's family members.
- Physical force is very rarely used rather the offender uses manipulation such as bribes, gifts, and games.
- 80% or more child sexual abuse cases never come to the attention of child protective services or law enforcement.
- Children often don't tell because they are afraid they won't be believed or worry about what a disclosure may do to their family.
- 36,210,368 reports of suspected child sexual exploitation were received to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children CyberTipline in 2023.
- Youth with physical disabilities are more likely to experience sexual violence than youth without physical disabilities.
- Children who have experienced child sexual abuse before age 11 are more likely to be re-victimized by other types of maltreatment, such as physical abuse and neglect.
- Investing in the care of children and families can reduce the risk of maltreatment reoccurring and can minimize its consequences.

Characteristics of sexual abuse include:

- Sexual abuse usually begins when a child is in early childhood and lasts several years
- Most children do not tell anyone about sexual abuse
- The typical perpetrator is a male using his position or power to take advantage of a child's trust, need for affection, and innocence
- Child sexual abuse occurs across social-economic and racial groups
- Children rarely lie about sexual abuse incidents

Prevention

Education is a crucial tool in preventing the sexual exploitation of children and can be implemented in various settings. In Tennessee and across the country, laws have been enacted to encourage public schools to provide students with instruction on personal body safety and how to report sexual abuse. Adults play a vital role in ensuring that children have safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments. Parents and caregivers can reinforce the skills their children learn at school, while professionals who work with children and youth can learn to recognize the symptoms of sexual abuse and how to support a child who has been victimized.

The Joint Task Force (JTF), in consultation with the TDCS Children's Advisory Council, has reviewed a variety of existing prevention curricula and identified several free or low-cost resources and training programs primarily for Tennessee public schools. However, other professionals working with children and youth can also use this document as a reference. These strategies aim to ensure that all children experience safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments.

Tennessee Statistics

- Of the 62,698 reports of child abuse and neglect, there were 9,653 cases with 12,280 allegations of sexual abuse in fiscal year 2024.
- 8.8 percent of allegations in FY 2024 were reports of sexual abuse.
- After investigating 10,762 individual reports of sexual abuse, TDCS classified 2,090 children as "substantiated" victims of sexual abuse in FY 2024.

The Victims in Fiscal Year 2024

- There were 27 infants under one year of age among the substantiated victims of sexual abuse.
- Children between the ages of 1 and 5 accounted for 163 of the substantiated victims of sexual abuse.
- There were 596 children between the ages of 6 and 11 among the substantiated victims of sexual abuse.

- There were 1,184 children between the ages of 12 and 17 among the substantiated victims of sexual abuse.

Economic Costs of Child Abuse and Neglect in Tennessee

- In a study, published June 2023, the University of Tennessee, Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research found that the economic impact of substantiated claims of child abuse and neglect in Tennessee is between $3.33 and $4.97 billion annually. Additionally, the report evaluated the lifetime cost per victim and found it to be between $285,464 to $425,912. This calculation factors in costs associated with child mortality, special education, residential care, juvenile detention, childhood medical care costs, adult medical costs, lower productivity, adult criminality, and premature adult mortality.
- Finally, the JTF and TDCS recognize that child sexual abuse is a significant problem in our state and has lifelong impacts on victims and society. By continuing to train child welfare staff and child-serving professionals such as educators to prevent, recognize, and react to child sexual abuse, we will protect our most precious resource – children and reduce or even eradicate the occurrence of child sexual abuse in Tennessee.

References:

https://files.dcs.tn.gov/policies/chap14/WA1.pdf

- https://www.missingkids.org/cybertiplinedata#:~:text=Of%20the%2049.5%20million%20videos,million%20(23%25)%20were%20unique.
- https://victimsofcrime.org/child-sexual-abuse-statistics/
- https://www.cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/about/about-child-sexual-abuse.html
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7702185/

JTF and TDCS Child Sexual & Severe Abuse Accomplishments

The *2023 Child Sexual Abuse Plan* listed priority goals for combatting child sexual abuse and severe abuse in Tennessee. These goals are listed below with accompanying information on progress in these areas.

Goal 1: Improve the CPIT response to child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse, emphasizing the importance of action as a team.

Action Steps Taken by the JTF

- The JTF CPIT Committee updated the **"Tennessee Statewide CPIT Best Practice Manual"** (formerly called CPIT Best Practice Manual) to include a medical/pediatric protocol and work done by representatives from the statewide CPIT organizations (TDCS, District Attorney's Conference (DAGC), Tennessee Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers (TNCAC), Sheriff's and Chief's Associations) on guidance around inclusion on human trafficking organizations.
- The JTF CPIT Committee also **reviewed and provided feedback to the state Human Trafficking Best Practice Manual** for addressing human trafficking awareness and effective services to trafficking victims. The committee also is planning to review reports that give a snapshot of CSEM cases in the region/state, look at growing relationships with appropriate agencies for referrals and counseling, and engage stakeholders in the process of improving response to these victims.
- Members of the JTF CPIT Committee continue to serve on the planning committee for the annual **Tennessee Connecting for Children's Justice (CCJ) Conference**. The annual conference is the largest event for child welfare professionals and responders to child maltreatment to receive training, support and leadership opportunities. At the November 2023 CCJ Conference, JTF CPIT members - Denise Alexander, Pierce Beckham, and Stephen Woerner as well as JTF Outreach and Awareness member Rebecca Bevans presented the following workshop sessions:
    - *What Do I Bring to the Table? Elevating the CPIT Case Review Process*
    - *Where's the Evidence? Understanding the Myths of Child Sexual Abuse from Disclosure to Courtroom*
    - Ethics of Child Abuse Reporting and Working with CPS: Part 1 and Part 2
- Members of the JTF CPIT Committee continued to advocate, gather input and provide guidance and support to the CPIT community as well as the sharing of information and resources – for example, the Committee provided guidance to the CPIT community on the revised Tennessee Statewide CPIT Manual in 2023 and 2024. In addition, members of the Committee visited five CPIT locations across the state to assess what is working well and not so well related to the handling and investigation of sex abuse and severe abuse cases.

State Actions and Practice Improvements

- TDCS OCS created a **Special Response Team**, which consist of former law enforcement located across the state to provide consultation and investigative support to frontline CPS staff in 2023. They assist on investigations, mentor case managers, offer consultation and provide critical training on topics like interviewing perpetrators and child death investigations.

- Throughout 2023 and 2024, TDCS provided **child sexual abuse training opportunities for staff and community partners** that included the workshops *Emerging Trends & Research in Child Sexual Abuse* and *Addressing the Spiritual Needs of Child Sexual Abuse Victims*. For example, *Emerging Trends & Research on Child Sexual Abuse* was a six-part informative series for TDCS staff and CPIT partners. The sessions were:
    - *Youth Engaging in Problematic Sexual Abuse*
    - *Current Expectations Working Child Sexual Abuse Cases*
    - *Understanding Adult Perpetrators*
    - *Grooming Behaviors in Child Sexual Abuse Investigations*
    - *Techniques for Preventing Child Sexual Abuse*
    - *Advanced Interviewing Techniques with Sex Offenders*

- TDCS continue to offer a **CPS Child Sexual Abuse training** that combined different community partners presenting on their area of expertise as it relates to child sexual abuse. The workshop is comprised of three levels. Participants include new investigators and CPIT partners.
    - *Understanding the Complexity of Child Sexual Abuse*
    - *How to Use Forensic Interviewing in Successful Investigations*
    - *What to Know About Sex Offenders and Grooming Behaviors*
    - *Medical Evaluations in Child Sexual Abuse Cases*
    - *Gathering Evidence and Perpetrator Interview Techniques*
    - *Investigations Involving Recantations: Your Case Isn't Over*
    - *Testifying in Sex Abuse Cases*
    - *Internet Crimes Against Children*
    - *Collaboration Leads to Prosecution and Protection*
    - *Investigation CSEM and Familial Trafficking*
    - *Sibling Sexual Abuse and Children with Sexual Behavioral Problems*
    - *TDCS Classifications and Upholding Substantiations*

The following chart shows the DCS trainings offered to staff and community partners.

Course Title	2023	2024	Grand Total
Caring for the Child With Sexual Trauma	1		1
Child Sex Trafficking (1hr)	207	141	348
Child Sexual Abuse 101	142	57	199
Child Sexual Abuse Workshop Level 1	125	56	181
Child Sexual Abuse Workshop Level 2	690	50	119
Child Sexual Abuse Workshop Level 3	49	91	140
Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors	85	71	156
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM) Fireside Chat (30 min)	24	23	47
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors	208	76	284

DCS Talks: Assessing for the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors (CSEM)		3	3
DCS Talks: Child Sexual Exploitation	10	7	17
Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and Our Foster Youth (1 hr)	30	22	52
Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors and Complex Trauma (1hr)	40	26	66
Effective Engagement with Child and Youth Survivors of Sex Trafficking	5		5
Preservice Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors	378	279	657
Sexual Abuse Certification	9		9
Sexual Assault and the Brain: The Neurobiology of Trauma with the Sexual Assault Center		86	86
Stewards of Children	652	456	1108
Talking to Kids	246	337	583
Trafficked Youth: Needs and Vulnerabilities		123	123
What to Know About Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking	223	3	226
Grand Total	**2503**	**1907**	**4410**

- In November 2023, **Children's Advocacy Centers of Tennessee (CACTN) annual CCJ Conference** for CPIT members and other child welfare professionals, addresses the specific training needs of the participants including, but not limited to the following topics:
    - *Partners in Protection: MDT Training using Simulations*
    - *Perpetrator Interview Techniques in Sexual Abuse and Child Abuse Cases*
    - *Where's the Evidence? Understanding the Myths of Child Sexual Abuse from Disclosure to Courtroom*
    - *Forensic Interviewing of Victims and Witnesses after a Mass Violence Incident*
    - *ICAC and MDT/CPIT Collaboration and Resources*
    - *Human Trafficking 101: Realize, Recognize, and Respond*
    - *Grooming Strategies Regarding Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Youth*
    - *Self-Generated Content and Sextortion Awareness and Prevention*
    - *What Do I Bring To the Table? Elevating the CPIT Case Review Process (presenters included a prosecutor, forensic interviewer, law enforcement, mental health and medical staff, family support specialist, and TDCS staff)*

- In 2023, TDCS collaborated with the Tennessee Public Safety Network to bring the **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) program to TDCS CPS staff for addressing work-related trauma and providing mental health recovery methods to strengthen the Department's workforce.**
- TDCS continued to provide the following trainings to CPIT staff across the state:
    - *Child Sexual Abuse 101*
    - *Child Sex Trafficking*
    - *Familial Trafficking: When the Protector is the Predator*
    - *Human Trafficking 101 for At Risk Youth*
    - *Identifying and Reporting Human Trafficking*

- *Our Kids: Sexual Abuse Supervisory Training*
- *Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking*
- *TDCS Talks: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors*

- In 2024, TDCS in collaboration with JTF members, Dr. William Murphy and Dr. Jacque Page and Sgt. Edward Conrads of the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department developed a set resources to assist TDCS and CPIT teams in the investigation of child sexual abuse.
  - ***Evidence for Consideration in Child Sexual Abuse Cases:*** *A list to help teams think beyond the forensic interview for different types of evidence to gather when investigating sex abuse.*
  - ***Alleged Perpetrator Interviews- Sexual Abuse:*** *Guidance for completing interviews with alleged perpetrators in child sexual abuse cases. DCS should only be completing these interviews if law enforcement has declined.*
  - ***Child Sexual Abuse Case Staffing Questions:*** *A guide for supervisors to use when staffing these cases with case managers. Case managers can also use it as a way to think through strategy and quality for these cases.*
  - ***Case Review Checklist- Child Sex Abuse Cases:*** *A checklist for case managers when working and closing your case to ensure all necessary tasks have been completed and documented. Supervisors can also use this when reviewing cases for closure.*
  - ***Children with Sexual Behaviors Chart:*** *A chart to help differentiate between normal, concerning, and problematic sexual behaviors in children developed by Dr. Page and Dr. Murphy.*
  - ***Minimal Facts Interviews:*** *An infographic to support staff in their delivery of minimal facts interviews.*

In FY 2024, TDCS provided the following child sexual and severe abuse training opportunities to staff and community partners:

- ***Child Sexual Abuse Workshops: 451 total participants*** *(90 were community partners)*
- ***Child Death Workshops: 126 total participants*** *(21 were community partners)*
- ***Domestic Violence Workshops: 178 total participants*** *(20 non-TDCS staff)*

Goal 2: Develop a TDCS document regarding Children with Sexual Behavior Problems (CSBPs) that outlines appropriate language (labels), types of assessment, and treatment.

Action Steps Taken by the JTF

- The JTF Mental Health/Treatment Committee has made progress on this goal such as conducted a literature review of the latest research on identification, assessment, and treatment of CSBP.

- JTF Mental Health/Treatment Committee member, Dr. William Murphy, a retired professor at the University of Tennessee Health and Science Center, Department of Psychiatry, presented the following workshop session at the 2023 CCJ Conference: **Assessments for Adolescents Who Have Engaged in Sexually Abusive Behavior: What Professionals Need to Know**.

Goal 3: Explore current practice for therapeutic interventions for youth who have been sex trafficked.

Action Steps Taken by the JTF

- The JTF Mental Health/Treatment Committee continues to work on condensing the 53-page CSEC document into a tip sheet: **"Commercial Sexual Exploitation for Children: Treatment Considerations."** The document is near completion and once finalized will be disseminated to TDCS frontline staff and child serving professionals.

State Actions and Practice Improvements

- In February 2023, TDCS offered a training on **"Effective Engagement with Children and Youth Survivors of Sex Trafficking"** to staff and community partners that focused on the following:
    - *Understanding the unique needs of survivors of sex trafficking and how to engage them.*
    - *Developing the ability to recognize survivor strengths and use them in case plan development.*
    - *Understanding how to connect survivors to culturally appropriate and supportive services.*

Goal 4: Educate and inform the public, childcare providers, schools, child welfare professional groups, law enforcement, health care organizations, and other groups about child welfare related resources and training opportunities.

Action Steps Taken by the JTF

- JTF Outreach and Awareness Committee member, Kristen Davis, was a guest on TCCY's podcast, *Roots and Wing* in April 2023 where she **highlighted the work the JTF does to mitigate child abuse and neglect**. Davis also highlighted protective factors such as the importance of educating oneself and others about the risk factors for child abuse, such as poverty, substance abuse, and mental health issues and advocating for policies and programs that address these underlying issues, such as affordable housing, access to healthcare, and mental health services.
- The JTF Outreach and Awareness Committee, along with the Shelby County CAPTA Citizen Review Panel, **reviewed and provided feedback to TDCS for improving the online mandated reporting training**. In addition, the

Committee reviewed the survey TDCS sent to school administrators and child abuse coordinators.

- In March 2024, the JTF Outreach and Awareness Committee surveyed TDCS staff and community partners about activities for **National Child Abuse Prevention Month (April).**
- The JTF Outreach and Awareness Committee continues to provide ongoing awareness of child abuse and neglect to organizations throughout the state. The Committee accomplishes this through dissemination of child welfare materials and resources to educators, other professional audiences, and the general community. For example, in April 2024, one of the committee members wrote an article for publication on Tennessee Kid Central website - **"A Pledge Beyond April: Building Safer Communities for Children in Tennessee."** The article highlighted the **problem of child abuse and neglect, warning signs, and five empowering ways Tennesseans can make a difference in their community in April**:
    - **Be Informed and Inform Others**: Arm yourself with knowledge about the signs of child abuse and neglect. Learn how to report and step in effectively. Then, spread this vital knowledge like wildfire. Share what you know in casual conversations with friends, family, or neighbors. Awareness is a powerful ally.
    - **Lead by Example**: You are a walking billboard of behavior for those around you. Show respect, care, and empathy in your daily interactions. Children are great imitators, so let them imitate something good! Your kindness and patience can ripple through the community, setting a positive tone.
    - **Support Families Around You**: Sometimes, a small gesture can lift a mountain off someone's shoulders. A chat, helping with groceries, or babysitting for a stressed parent – these acts of kindness can be a lifeline. It is about building a web of support, one thread at a time.
    - **Be a Voice for Children and Families**: Stand up for policies and initiatives that uplift children and families. Get involved in local governance, back child-friendly legislation, or stay informed about children's issues. Your voice can be a powerful agent of change.
    - **Foster a Community of Inclusivity and Empathy**: Create a space where everyone feels accepted and understood. Organize community events, celebrate diversity, and teach children about respect and kindness. Every family finds a place to belong and thrive in such a community.
- To respond to **Public Chapter 571** (effective July 1, 2024), members of the JTF Outreach and Awareness and CPIT Committees, along with members of TDCS Children's Advisory Council updated the *Erin's Law Guide* – a document that addresses child sexual abuse prevention and intervention curricula for public schools.

State Actions and Practice Improvements

- In April 2023, TDCS promoted **Child Abuse Prevention Month** through social media posts, e-blasts, and radio/newspapers. The department also sent out a Child Abuse

Prevention Toolkit to all partners for them to post on their social media sites and delivered presentations to churches, hospitals, local city officials, schools, libraries, pediatrician's offices, civic organizations, and businesses.

- In April 2023, TDCS and TDOE provided **training to foster parents across the state** on the **Tennessee Homeless Education Program**. The program serves the unique needs of children and youth who experience homelessness, such as transportation, frequent school changes, loss of school records, emotional stress, and lack of resources. The presenters discussed the different types of homelessness, risk factors, and the impact of homelessness on children. At the same training event, Ashleigh Chapman, human rights lawyer and founder of Engage Together® and Justice U™, delivered a training on **CSEM to help foster parents better understand the risk factors of children in care, red flags that they are likely to see, and how their unique role provides unique opportunities to recognize, respond, and even prevent human trafficking.**
- In 2023, **TBI Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) affiliates conducted 17 sex trafficking presentations and public events for over 4,600 attendees.** They also created and posted internet safety and sextortion videos as well as SMART Parenting Tips and materials on their website, and conducted electronic K9 dog demonstrations.
- In May 2024, TDCS distributed **Child Sex Abuse Prevention posters** were to the following state agencies program areas: TDHS Day Care Licensing (2,500); TDHS Child and Adult Care Licensing (350) as well as TBI (500) and Tennessee National Guard (500). Other agencies that received the posters included, but were not limited to the following: District Attorney Office, Polk Clark Enrichment Center, McNairy County Juvenile Court, WRAP of Madison County, Shelby County Family Safety Center, Metro Nashville Police Department, Stewart County Juvenile Court, Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute, Tennessee Housing Authority, Tennessee National Guard, Families In Crisis, CACs; Hamblen County Government Office of the County Mayor, Scott County Shelter Society, and Sheriff's Offices.
- TN Department of Human Services (TDHS) captures child-care providers' trainings through **TNPAL** (Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning, the online learning management system, which captures all TDHS approved and required trainings completed by Child Care Providers, capturing their professional accomplishments and professional certificates. Between July 2023 and August 2024, **30,848 child-care providers completed the "Recognizing and Responding to Suspected Child Sexual Abuse" course and 14,784 completed the "Maltreatment/Mandated Reporting and Shaken Baby Syndrome" course.**
- In 2023 and 2024, TDCS continued to provide the following **resources and trainings for School Child Abuse Coordinators**.
    - *New Procedures for LEAs for Reporting Cases of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect*
    - *Education Policy Brief — ACEs for Educators & Stakeholders*
    - *Keeping Children Safe During COVID & Social Distancing*
    - *Teaching Children From Poverty and Trauma*
    - *The Role of Educators in Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse & Neglect*
    - *Trauma Toolkit for Educators*
    - *How to Spot Child Abuse or Neglect in Remote Learning Environments*
    - *Child Abuse Is Harder to Spot During the Pandemic. What Can Educators Do?*

- In 2023 and 2024, **TDCS offered foster parents the following courses for satisfying the trafficking/exploitation requirement**:

  The table below shows specific course titles that fulfill the requirement; note that some parents attended multiple trainings.

Course	2023	2024	Total
Essential Knowledge to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	288		288
Human Trafficking Awareness (McMinn County Schools)	1		1
Human Trafficking Crisis Intervention and Safety Planning (2 hr)		34	34
Human Trafficking Overview	12	21	33
Identifying and Reporting Human Trafficking in Tennessee	7		7
Sextortion (1 hr)		31	31
Trafficked Youth: Needs and Vulnerabilities	61	16	77
Trauma Bonding and Trafficked Youth	37	39	76
What to Know about Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking (CHRP4561)	2094	1294	3388
Grand Total	**2500**	**1435**	**3935**

- In 2023 and 2024, TDCS offered foster parents the following courses for satisfying the child sexual abuse requirement:

  The table below shows specific course titles; note that some parents attended multiple trainings.

Course	2023	2024	Total
Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma		1	1
Caring for the Child with Sexual Trauma (CHRP2066)	1244	907	2151
Child Sexual Abuse 101	51		51
Right Time Video: Sexual Trauma	384	269	653
Grand Total	**1679**	**1177**	**2856**

- In January 2024 (**Human Trafficking Awareness Month)**, TDCS provided the following trainings to its staff, foster parents, and community partners:
    - *Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking*
    - *Trafficked Youth: Needs and Vulnerabilities*
    - *Human Trafficking 101*

- In August 2024, TDCS began offering monthly trainings to school child abuse coordinators across the state – for example, **Child Sexual Abuse 101,** which includes foundational information on child sexual abuse and **Sexual Assault and the Brain: The Neurobiology of Trauma,** which explores the neurobiological aspects of trauma resulting from sexual assault.
- In FY 2024, the number of individuals who completed TDCS Online Mandated Reporter Training was 36,938:

Total Completing Mandated Reporter Training - July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

Affiliation	Total
Child Care Professional	3058
DCS Staff	511
Faith Based Community	1276
First Responder	84
Foster Parent	262
Hospital Personnel	137
Law Enforcement	384
Other Parent	130
Other Social Worker	679
Other	4937
Provider Staff	1877
School Personnel	21296
Student	2296
Wilder Contractor	11
Total	**36938**

Goal 5: Improve the effectiveness of child welfare-related proceedings.

Action Steps Taken by the JTF

- The JTF Court Improvement Committee finalized a booklet for children who have experienced abuse and neglect called ***What Happens in Juvenile Court – Dependency and Neglect Cases?*** The Committee engaged youth voices for feedback and involved youth to create the illustration.

- Members of the JTF Court Improvement also finalized the **pro se petitions. The petitions** were approved by the AOC and Tennessee Supreme Court. In addition, the petition paperwork have been translated into several languages and a QR Code is being utilized for access to the petitions, instructions, and glossaries.
- The JTF Court Improvement Committee **updated the *Social Workers and Other Helping Professionals as Witnesses at Court curriculum* t**o ensure it aligned with new Tennessee laws and rules. In addition, to make the curriculum more appealing and engaging, illustrations and other design elements were added to the power point presentation slides.

  The curriculum, which was designed to be delivered by licensed attorneys and an expert in domestic violence abuse services, learning objectives are:

  - *What to look for on the subpoena*
  - *Whether or not you have to testify*
  - *What to bring*
  - *How to communicate with the attorney who subpoenaed you*
  - *What to expect at court*
  - *What to do and what not to do while testifying*
  - *The difference between fact and opinion witnesses*
  - *How to become qualified as an expert witness*

- The JTF Court Improvement Committee also continued to look at ways to **improve advocacy for children and training for Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) members**. In partnership with TDCS and the Administrative Office of the Court (AOC), the following trainings were provided to FCRBs in Calendar Year 2023:
  - *Common Mental Health Considerations Relevant to Foster Care*
  - *Fostering College Success: Supporting Foster Youth in Higher Education*
  - *An Introduction to Motivational Interviewing (JTF member Dr. Jon Ebert, presenter)*
  - *Maintaining Wellness While Working in Trauma (Dr. Ebert, presenter)*
  - *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) (Dr. Ebert, presenter)*
  - *Creating Normalcy Through Prudent Parenting*
  - *Becoming Culturally Responsive Child Welfare Professionals*

- Members of the JTF Court Improvement Committee also continued to prepare and deliver **child welfare court-related training** on topics such as: (1) taking testimony from children; (2) social workers and other professionals as witnesses in child welfare proceedings; (3) CASA court reports; and (4) dependent and neglected case practice tips for parents' attorneys and GALs. They also present at Tennessee state/regional annual conferences such as: (1) CASA; (2) CCJ; (3) TDCS Foster Parent; and (4) TCJFCJ.
- In 2023/2024, JTF member and Vanderbilt Center of Excellence for Children in State Custody clinical director **Dr. Jon Ebert delivered courses to the Foster Care Review Board members, TDCS and Court staff, and others who participate in the boards**.
  - *An Introduction to Motivational Interviewing*

- *Maintaining Wellness while Working in Trauma*
- *Adverse Childhood Experiences*

- JTF Court Improvement Committee member Judge Andy Brigham delivered a presentation about **A Judge's Perspective of CASA** at the 2024 Tennessee CASA State Conference ***https://publuu.com/flip-book/269621/1119478***

State Actions and Practice Improvements

- TDCS regional general counsels, along with their assistants, continue to use ***Social Workers and Other Helping Professionals as Witnesses at Court*** curriculum as part of their annual performance training plan.
- The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Court Improvement Program (CIP) is working closely with TDCS to **improve the quality of legal representation in child welfare proceedings** by providing parent's attorneys and GALs with the skills necessary to represent parents and children in child dependency proceedings through the development of comprehensive, connected training experience. This year-long training program will be offered to cohort of GALs, parent's attorneys, and TDCS attorneys who will complete five components focused on increasing their skills and best practice in the representation of parents and children in child welfare proceedings.
- In 2023, TDCS implemented an **International and Cultural Affairs Division within TDCS Office of General Council to handle specialized services and education for foreign-born parents and youth.** The team consists of a cultural affairs attorney, program director and specialist staff. The cultural affairs specialists are responsible for assisting TDCS case managers with navigating services for foreign-born families – for example, international placements for children, interpreter services, and coordinating services. The cultural affairs team also is responsible for educating TDCS case managers and supervisors about international and immigration issues.
- In 2023, the AOC Court Improvement Program (CIP) updated the **Model Foster Care Review Board** (FCRB) Manual. The revision provides basic information regarding Model FCRB responsibilities and procedures.
- TDCS, in partnership with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS), **added eight new sites for the state's Safe Baby Courts (SBC) program** bringing the total number of SBCs in Tennessee to 22. The new sites are located in Bradley County, DeKalb County, Gibson County, Hamilton County, Johnson City, Perry County, Robertson County, and Sevier County. The eight expansion sites will begin offering services to families in 2024.
- Stacy Miller, Attorney in the 20th Judicial District and former JTF member, and Trish Hayes, Metro Nashville Public Defender's Office social worker, presented the newly updated ***Social Workers and Other Helping Professionals as Witnesses at Court*** curriculum to 250 participants at the 2024 Tennessee CASA State Conference.

Summary of Legislative Activities Related to the JTF Priorities and Interests

The JTF continued to monitor legislative activities related to the task force's priority areas and interests. Below are state child welfare laws **introduced** in 2024 (113th General Assembly):

- **SB1797:** Prohibits anonymous child abuse/neglect reports to TDCS. Investigators must provide certain materials to parents/guardians before child visits/interviews.
- **SB2777:** Excludes positive prenatal/newborn cannabinoid test from child abuse definition. Does not consider a child under eight positive for cannabinoids due to in-utero exposure as severe child abuse. (HB2495 companion).
- **SB2668:** Expands the definition of child sexual exploitation to include AI-generated images. Broadens the definition of material related to child sexual exploitation and defines artificial intelligence for legal purposes.
- **SB2071.** Expands the eligibility for reimbursement as a relative caregiver by removing the income limitations and including a relative caregiver who meets the eligibility requirements and has been awarded custody by an order of any court.
- **HB2760:** Requires domestic violence and child abuse training for judges involved in child custody cases.
- **HB1986:** Limits anonymous child abuse reports & requires pre-investigation disclosure to parents/guardians. Bill prohibits anonymous reports to TDCS and requires investigators to disclose their identity, summarize allegations, and explain DCS procedures before visiting a child's home. (SB1797 House companion).

State Legislative Updates (113th General Assembly Public Acts):

Below are state laws amended and/or passed to strengthen and improve the handling of investigation, prevention, and intervention of child abuse cases.

- **PC139: Admissibility of child forensic interviews.** Increases the age for the admissibility of statements made during a forensic interview from age 13 to under the age of 18. Expands admissible forensic interviews from statements made by a child describing sexual contact performed with or on the child by another to statements describing sexual, abusive, or violent contact performed with or on the child by another or performed by a person with or on another and witnessed by the child. Retains current requirements for forensic interviewer qualification but adds provision allowing a person to conduct forensic interviews who has been supervised by an experienced forensic interviewer for a minimum of 20 forensic interviews. Effective Date: April 6, 2023.

- **PC197: Release of confidential information by DCS upon presentation of court order.** Adds district attorneys general to those the department of children's services must release confidential information to upon presentation of an appropriate court order. Effective Date: April 24, 2023.
- **PC266: Assistant DAs as lead prosecutors in cases involving crimes against children.** Requires district attorneys general to designate one assistant district attorney general as the lead prosecutor in cases involving crimes committed against children. Requires TBI to provide annual training to assistant district attorneys designated as lead prosecutors in crimes committed against children. Effective Date: July 1, 2023
- **PC266: Abrial's Law, the Keeping Children Safe from Family Violence Act.** Requires all judges involved in child custody proceedings to complete at least two hours of training or continuing education courses on domestic violence in topics such as child sexual abuse, physical abuse, and others. Effective Date: January 1, 2024.
- **PC559:** Allows the **district attorneys general conference, the administrative office of the courts, the Tennessee chapter of children's advocacy centers, the department of children's services, and law enforcement agencies to enter into data sharing agreements** that allow for the sharing of information necessary to ensure compliance with statutory reporting requirements; specifies that data shared pursuant to an agreement retains its confidential status consistent with current law. Effective Date: March 12, 2024.
- **PC571:** Revises the instruction required as part of a family life curriculum to include **training on internet crimes against children involving sexting, sextortion, and the exploitation of a minor;** requires the **Tennessee joint task force on children's justice and child sexual abuse**, in consultation with the children's services advisory council, to annually recommend certain age-appropriate curricula to the department of education; revises the information that LEAs and public charter schools must annually provide to the department of children's services. Effective Date: July 1, 2024.
- **PC591: Requires the permanency plan for any child in foster care for six months or longer as a result of abuse or neglect** that includes as a permanency goal the return of the child to the parent, to also include **a requirement that the parent complete trauma-informed education before the child is returned to the parent.** The trauma-informed education may be completed via electronic means. The department of children's services is authorized to work with nonprofit organizations to develop appropriate training materials for the trauma-informed education required by this bill and delivery pathways at no additional cost to the state. Effective Date: July 1, 2025.

A Plan for Action

During a meeting at the Ellington Agricultural Center in Nashville, TN on September 5, 2024, the JTF unveiled top priorities for the next two years, clearly outlining action items that will guide the committees and members' work as they continue to collaborate with TDCS, TCCY, TDHS, TDOH, TDOE, the State Board of Education (SBOE), CACTN, CASA, and other stakeholders.

Most of the priorities are multiyear tasks and continue to focus on efforts to improve the investigation, prevention, intervention, treatment, prosecution, and judiciary handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation.

2025 Goals and Action Steps

Goal 1: Continue to improve the CPIT response to child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse.

Action Steps:

1. To ensure consistent funding for service provision to children, review funding, for all child protection services, including forensic interviews, victim advocacy, therapy, prevention, and CPIT coordination.
2. Identify best practices for children exposed to drugs (e.g. THC) in order to provide guidance and training to CPIT members on how to handle and classify these type of cases.
3. Communicate shared coordination consistent across systems related to forensic interview data (how many interviewers, number of interviews, county coverage, time spent completing interviews and in other activities); and prosecution data (number of cases prosecuted, trial outcomes, and convictions that involved a forensic interview).
4. Identify and provide training opportunities regarding the two new laws (PC 139 and PC237) and implementation of the laws.
5. Continue to review as necessary, distribute, and present the "CPIT Best Practice Manual" to the CPIT members across the state.

Goal 2: Continue to build on the work done related to therapeutic practices for youth who have experienced CSE.

Action Steps:

1. Review and finalize the tip sheet document: "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Treatment Considerations."
2. Disseminate the document to child serving professionals and advocates.

Goal 3: Identification/curation of national resources on supporting children with problematic sexual behavior (PSB) for the purpose of disseminating to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) and other statewide systems serving children.

Action Steps:

1. Identify quality resources for education on problematic sexual behavior (PSB).
2. Prioritize target systems [e.g. child welfare, courts, treatment professionals] for problematic sexual behavior (PSB) resources.
3. Develop and implement a strategy for the dissemination of resources on problematic sexual behavior (PSB).

Goal 4: Determine the need for additional resources related to children with sexual behavior problems to inform TDCS and other child serving systems.

Action Steps:

1. Identify existing resources for children with sexual behavior problems and develop a plan for dissemination.
2. Explore collaboration with prevention resources, including UT SWORPS FFPSA consultants and TDCS Regional Mental Health Consultants.
3. Ongoing review/Identification of the best resources to inform TDCS and child serving systems about CSBP.

Goal 5: Educate and inform the public, childcare providers, schools, child welfare professional groups, law enforcement, health care organizations, and other groups about child welfare related resources and training opportunities.

Action Steps:

1. Develop a one-pager for disseminating child welfare resources and training opportunities information to state child-serving agencies and child welfare professionals encouraging them to share with their networks, post on their social media platforms, and websites, including posting the information on the JTF and TDCS websites.
2. Engage key stakeholders such as AIMHi Tennessee, Systems of Care Across Tennessee, and Tennessee Voices for Children as well as identify other stakeholders to assist with disseminating the information to audiences who serve children and youth.
3. Invite a representative from ETSU Department of Social Work to present on the Child Advocacy Studies program.
4. Annually review, in partnership with the TDCS, the survey of school administrators and child abuse coordinators to develop next steps.
5. Annually review, in partnership with TDCS Children's Advisory Council and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Council, the Erin's Law Guidelines.
6. Continue to review as necessary, the state's online mandated reporter training.

Goal 6: Improve the effectiveness of child welfare-related proceedings.

Action Steps:

1. Communicate with juvenile court judges' executive committee; TDCS legal; Tennessee Bar Association Family Juvenile and Children's Law Division; and Attorney General and Public Defender conferences about suggestions for conference topics and court improvement tools.
2. Create guidelines and considerations to assist courts in determining appropriate commitment status for children.
3. Support the Statewide Safe Baby Court Leadership Team in implementing the Tennessee Safe Baby Court Best Practice Standards to assist courts in all Dependency and/or Neglect cases.
4. Promote quality legal representation from attorneys appointed in juvenile court by developing specialized training and curriculum and focusing on retention.
5. Review children and placement's needs in non-custodial/kinship placement for best services for children (including, childcare, medical, behavioral health, education, and permanency).

6. Support timely reunification and permanency for children and families involved in the juvenile court system.
7. Continue to review as necessary, distribute, and present the "Social Workers as Witnesses at Court" curriculum to ensure consistency with current rules and laws.

Appendix A

Sexual and Severe Abuse Allegations during Calendar Year 2023 by Judicial District and County

Judicial District/ County	Drug Exposed Allegation Count	Neglect Allegation Count*	Physical Abuse Allegation Count**	Sexual Abuse Allegation Count
1st Judicial District	**162**	**113**	**75**	**429**
Carter	46	44	29	135
Johnson	20	11	6	44
Unicoi	8	10	3	25
Washington	88	48	37	225
2nd Judicial District	**101**	**63**	**36**	**281**
Sullivan	101	63	36	281
3rd Judicial District	**159**	**124**	**61**	**406**
Greene	59	50	18	142
Hamblen	33	39	15	115
Hancock	8	4	7	16
Hawkins	59	31	21	133
4th Judicial District	**177**	**125**	**63**	**445**
Cocke	58	33	11	78
Grainger	9	12	4	46
Jefferson	26	18	14	88
Sevier	84	62	34	233
5th Judicial District	**79**	**55**	**26**	**291**
Blount	79	55	26	291
6th Judicial District	**268**	**186**	**86**	**823**
Knox	268	186	86	823
7th Judicial District	**83**	**61**	**17**	**175**
Anderson	83	61	17	175
8th Judicial District	**115**	**85**	**36**	**277**
Campbell	37	17	17	70
Claiborne	19	30	4	56
Fentress	20	11	5	37
Scott	24	14	6	73
Union	15	13	4	41
9th Judicial District	**95**	**81**	**28**	**218**
Loudon	25	22	3	77
Meigs	25	9	6	13
Morgan	12	19	2	32
Roane	33	31	17	96
10th Judicial District	315	175	89	528
Bradley	165	87	35	263
Mcminn	77	41	22	116
Monroe	43	23	17	115
Polk	30	24	15	34
11th Judicial District	**340**	**194**	**126**	**592**
Hamilton	340	194	126	592

12th Judicial District	**213**	**109**	**50**	**299**
Bledsoe	26	14	6	34
Franklin	45	34	12	67
Grundy	18	8	6	33
Marion	37	15	15	35
Rhea	57	28	8	96
Sequatchie	30	10	3	34
13th Judicial District	**286**	**180**	**114**	**430**
Clay	13	9	3	21
Cumberland	80	33	29	121
Dekalb	54	29	13	64
Overton	21	15	6	44
Pickett	2	6		6
Putnam	75	60	44	128
White	41	28	19	46
14th Judicial District	**52**	**62**	**27**	**137**
Coffee	52	62	27	137
15th Judicial District	**190**	**103**	**64**	**416**
Jackson	17	17	1	37
Macon	58	23	20	83
Smith	41	20	10	41
Trousdale	11	7	3	18
Wilson	63	36	30	237
16th Judicial Disrict	**171**	**205**	**107**	**580**
Cannon	23	15	6	50
Rutherford	148	190	101	530
17th Judicial District	**118**	**87**	**55**	**280**
Bedford	58	43	35	140
Lincoln	25	21	5	72
Marshall	35	21	14	59
Moore		2	1	9
18th Judicial District	**104**	**72**	**51**	**343**
Sumner	104	72	51	343
19th Judicial District	**173**	**166**	**92**	**562**
Montgomery	132	133	69	437
Robertson	41	33	23	125
20th Judicial District	**421**	**363**	**240**	**925**
Davidson	421	363	240	925
21st Judicial District	**61**	**54**	**30**	**257**
Hickman	18	14	10	65
Lewis	12	3	1	22
Perry	10	6	2	19
Williamson	21	31	17	151
22nd Judicial District	**145**	**120**	**84**	**407**
Giles	32	38	20	80
Lawrence	26	31	13	107
Maury	80	38	47	195
Wayne	7	13	4	25
23rd Judicial District	**114**	**90**	**63**	**264**
Cheatham	26	28	23	60
Dickson	59	31	24	109
Houston	13	8	5	21

Humphreys	12	20	8	56
Stewart	4	3	3	18
24th Judicial District	**149**	**102**	**42**	**238**
Benton	13	9	4	31
Carroll	48	13	3	56
Decatur	10	4	7	19
Hardin	53	55	22	69
Henry	25	21	6	63
25th Judicial District	**198**	**136**	**75**	**337**
Fayette	28	15	16	36
Hardeman	32	27	11	47
Lauderdale	35	28	14	60
Mcnairy	34	23	10	68
Tipton	69	43	24	126
26th Judicial District	**238**	**180**	**102**	**373**
Chester	42	37	11	43
Henderson	35	26	31	51
Madison	161	117	60	279
27th Judicial District	**62**	**44**	**23**	**115**
Obion	33	15	14	53
Weakley	29	29	9	62
28th Judicial District	**82**	**56**	**33**	**158**
Crockett	13	7	6	17
Gibson	49	33	22	120
Haywood	20	16	5	21
29th Judicial District	**67**	**35**	**17**	**89**
Dyer	58	29	16	74
Lake	9	6	1	15
30th Judicial District	**736**	**903**	**609**	**1,857**
Shelby	736	903	609	1,857
31st Judicial District	**56**	**48**	**28**	**142**
Vanburen	9	12	3	20
Warren	47	36	25	122
Grand Total				

* Includes Allegations of Abandonment, Environmental Neglect, Educational Neglect, Medical Maltreatment, Lack of Supervision, Nutritional Neglect and Psychologica

**Includes Allegations of Physical Abuse, Domestic Violence, Abuse Death and Neglect Death

Appendix B

Joint Task Force Three Year Assessment Survey

Joint Task Force Three Year Assessment Survey and Results Per the Federal Children's Justice Act

Following the publication of the *2023 State Plan*, TDCS OCS and the JTF fielded a three-year assessment survey to law enforcement detectives and investigators across the state to assess their training needs. The previous three-year assessment survey results had indicated "a need for future focus on TDCS worker training, multidisciplinary collaboration on investigation, trauma-informed care, and multidisciplinary training," prompting this follow-up effort.

Survey Purpose and Methodology

At the request of TDCS, the University of Tennessee, College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (UT SWORPS), conducted an online survey in December 2023 and January 2024, through Survey Monkey to CPIT members across the state. The survey, part of the department's 2024 CJA Three-Year Assessment efforts, was designed to collect information from CPIT team members about their knowledge of two new state laws, how the laws might impact CPIT work, and to solicit their recommendations for improving the investigative and prosecutorial handling of child sexual abuse and other severe abuse cases. Additionally, the survey sought to collect information from forensic interviewers and prosecutors about their perceptions of how CPITs were working and how they could be strengthened.

To ensure the widest possible distribution to all CPIT members across the state, the JTF asked the Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) of Tennessee to distribute an email with a link to the survey to the CPIT members in their regions. The CAC directors agreed to help distribute the survey link via the email. They distributed the email with the link on December 7, 2023, and closed on December 18 and resulted in 217 responses. Due to low response rate likely resulting from the holiday season, the survey was sent again on January 8, 2024 and remained opened until January 19, 2024.

When the survey closed on January 19, 2024, 419 individuals had responded to it.

Public Chapter 139, which went into effect on April 6, 2023:

- Increases the age for the admissibility of statements made during a forensic interview from age 13 to under the age of 18.
- Expands admissible forensic interviews from statements made by a child describing sexual contact performed with or on the child by another to statements

describing sexual, abusive, or violent contact performed with or on the child by another or performed by a person with or on another and witnessed by the child.

- Retains current requirements for forensic interviewer qualification but adds provision allowing a person to conduct forensic interviews who has been supervised by an experienced forensic interviewer for a minimum of 20 forensic interviews.

Public Chapter 237, which went into effect on July 1, 2023:

- Requires district attorneys general to designate one assistant district attorney general as the lead prosecutor in cases involving crimes committed against children.
- Requires TBI to provide annual training to assistant district attorneys designated as lead prosecutors in crimes committed against children.

Highlights from the Survey to CPITs

- 419 members of the CPIT community representing both rural and urban areas participated in the survey.
- The respondents identified their role on CPIT as CAC executive director (4.77%); MDT/CPIT coordinator (3.82%); medical staff (3.58%); therapist (4.77%); DCS CPS Investigator (22.20%); prosecutor (8.59%); law enforcement officer (31.99%); forensic interviewer (4.53%); victim/family advocate (5.25%); Juvenile Court staff (5.73%); and other (4.77%).
- A little over one third of the respondents (34.84%) reported working in their role from 1 to less than 5 years followed by more than 10 years (30.31%); five to 10 years (22.43%); and less than one year (12.41%).
- The majority of respondents (67.54%) reported they had *not* received training on how to implement HB 557; while 21.96% reported "Yes" and 10.50% reported "Unsure."
- A little over half of the respondents (54.65%) were familiar with HB 554 while 37.23% of the respondents reported "No" and 8.11% reported "Unsure."
- When asked what can be done to ensure effective implementation of the two new laws, some of the responses were:
    - *"Training and education of staff, attorneys, and law enforcement personnel."*
    - *"Make sure that DA is actually working the cases and not just a "decision maker" as to the cases. Also make sure they have to attend CPIT."*
    - *"Apply the new laws for Standard operating procedures."*
    - *"Having an ADA equipped with the knowledge of these cases is so important, effective, and beneficial to the child victim."*
    - *"A push by the DAG conference for the DAG implementation and use of FIs. Emphasis on use of new laws in CPIT review."*
    - *"Training for all CPIT partners and communication with heads of departments to ensure that protocols are put into place. Not only for CPIT members but also for those on the front lines. Complete training to ensure individuals are aware of new practices an there importance*."

- *"Training for judges!"*

- Prosecutors' respondents were asked **if they have the resources they need to pursue and prosecute child abuse cases:** 53.49% (23) reported "Yes," 30.23% (13) reported "No" and 16.28% (7) reported "Unsure."
- For those who reported "No," they were asked what resources are needed. Overwhelmingly, respondents wanted more staff. Selected comments that illustrate them follow.
  - *"More DA's and more investigators"*
  - *"More experts to testify as to why children disclose in different ways."*
  - *"In our area/district (northeast region) the only resource I am aware of is the CAC. We do not have any other resources for these children. I know in other districts - there are non-profit resources such as Our Kids, etc. We do not have a resource other than the hospital to provide medical examinations if needed. So, they are rarely done since the hospital does not perform them for free. The hospital is not specifically trained to deal with children in these situations. (Not a children's hospital)."*
  - *"Training for law enforcement response & evidence collection."*
  - *"More DA's. More staff, especially victim witness coordinators"*
- The JTF looked at **common themes or similarities in the responses, and found many similar recommendations for improving the investigative and prosecution handling of child sexual abuse and severe abuse cases**. Three strong themes emerged from the content review, and can be stated as recommendations.
  1. Provide/prioritize training to CPIT team members' especially the law enforcement community and prosecutors;
  2. Improve communication between the CPIT members especially among TDCS, law enforcement and prosecutors and how information is shared with families; and
  3. Develop consistency and uniform practices in the handling, investigation, and prosecution of these cases.
- Other recommendations from the respondents were:
  - *More training for all departments (DCS, DA's office, Judges/Magistrates, LE personnel, medical personnel, etc.) on what child abuse looks like, how children disclose abuse, and why children recant abuse. Increase time off from work for all employees that work with child abuse as their day job since this is a hard subject matter.*
  - *"Having more properly trained law enforcement officers that specialize in child abuse and child sex abuse that are willing to put in the time to show up to forensics and do interviews with perpetrators"*
  - *"Joint training for all CPIT members."*
  - *"Ensuring clear communication between the community services providers (TDCS, CAC, DA's office, Law Enforcement). This ensures everyone is able to have clear knowledge of what is being done and ensure that the children and families being served are getting the best services.*
  - *"The CPIT/MDT Coordinator should have access to TFACTS and Justware, or whatever online recording systems used by the other agencies that are CPIT*

partners to ensure better communication, case tracking, and partner accountability."

- *"Making sure we gather important evidence at the beginning of the investigation to be able to support the child's statement. It's important to consider all factors when determining the timeframe that a child needs to be scheduled for an FI."*
- *"For cases involving dcs/ ocs [TDCS Office of Child Safety] and law enforcement working cases (CPIT) it would be helpful for L.E to have timeframes consistent with TDCS/OCS this could help complete task within 60 days and move forward with steps including court action by both L.E and child safety workers."*

Appendix C
Glossary of Common Acronyms

Glossary of Common Acronyms Used in the Report

Agency	Abbreviation
Administrative Office of the Courts	AOC

Agency	Abbreviation
Child Advocacy Centers (local agencies)	CACs
Child Protective Services	CPS
Child Protective Investigation Team	CPIT
Children's Advocacy Centers of Tennessee	CACTN
Connecting for Children's Justice Conference	CCJ Conference
Court Appointed Special Advocate	CASA
Foster Care Review Board	FCRB
Joint Task Force on Children's Justice/Child Sexual Abuse	JTF
National Association of Social Workers	NASW
Office of Child Safety	OCS
Safe Baby Court	SBC
State Board of Education	SBOE
Tennessee Bureau of Investigation	TBI
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth	TCCY
Tennessee Department of Children's Services	TDCS
Tennessee Department of Education	TDOE
Tennessee Department of Health	TDOH
Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	TDMHSAS
Tennessee Department of Human Services	TDHS
University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service	UT SWORPS

Appendix D

Joint Task Force on Children's Justice/Child Sexual Abuse Membership Directory

Joint Task Force on Children's Justice and Child Sexual Abuse, Members

President: Lynne Farrar, TN CASA

Vice President: Pat Wade, TDHS

Sandra Allen, Early Success Coalition

Denise Alexander, Our Kids

Judge Trey Anderson, Grundy County General Sessions Court

Kayla Balinger, Chattanooga Police Department

Rebecca Bevans, TDCS *

Marlene Boshears, Guardian At-litem

Ellen Boyd, TDHS

Delaine Bottoms, Carl Perkins Exchange Club

Judge Andy Brigham, Stewart County General Sessions/Juvenile Court

Dr. Lauren Burge, Le Bonheur Children's Hospital *

Dana Cobb, TCCY

Edward Conrads, Metro Nashville Police Department *

Dr. Tim Cooper, TDCS

Kristen Davis, Nurture the Next

Matthew Dixon, Metro Nashville Police Department

Dr. Jon Ebert, Vanderbilt University COE

Linda Elligan, CAC of Hamilton County

Stephanie Etheridge, Administrative Office of the Courts

Lynne Farrar, Tennessee CASA

Rebecca Franklin, Guardian Ad-litem

Annette Gentry, Victim Advocate

Craig Hargrow, TCCY

Dawn Harper, Nashville Children's Alliance

Marjahna Hart-Curry, Department of Children's Services

Anthony Johnson, Parent

Danielle Jones, Jackson/Madison County Police Department

Lanis Karnes, Guardian Ad-litem

Catherine Knowles, Metro Nashville Public Schools

Amy Koslick, TDCS

Dr. Karen Lakin, Monroe Carell's Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt *

Amber Lawrence, TBI

Sammi Maifair, TDCS

Melissa McGee, TCCY

Michael Meise, private attorney

Dr. William Murphy, University of Tennessee Health Science Center

Dr. Jacque Page, University of Tennessee Health Science Center

Lori Paisley, Department of Education

Dr. Mary Palmer, East Tennessee Children's Hospital *

Dr. Marymer Perales, East Tennessee Children's Hospital

Elizabeth Reeve, TDMHSAS *

Renea Satterwhite, TDOH

Dr. Larry Seeman, private psychologist

Jennifer Stribling, Assistant District Attorney 23rd Judicial District

Virginia Stallworth, Memphis CAC

Jackie Talley, TDMHSAS

Theresa Vay-Smith, Legal Aid Society

Pat Wade, TDHS

Stephen Woerner, Children's Advocacy Centers of Tennessee

Billy Worsham, Arc of Tennessee and foster advocate

Verna Wyatt, Tennessee Voices for Victims

* Denotes nonvoting members

Joint Task Force on Children's Justice/Child Sexual Abuse Coordinator

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