

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TENNESSEE CELEBRATES CHILD HEALTH MONTH

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Governor Bill Lee has proclaimed October 2019 **Child Health Month** in Tennessee. Child Health Month is a time to celebrate and raise awareness around what Tennessee is doing to promote the health of our most important resource: Tennessee's children.

"Our work has always included a focus on protecting, promoting and improving the wellbeing of Tennessee children and encouraging a lifelong pursuit of healthy living," said Tennessee Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP. "TDH is active in many areas in supporting children's health, but each of us has a role to play to help keep Tennessee children safe and thriving."

Protecting Infant Health

TDH data show there were 38 fewer infant deaths in the state in 2018 than in 2017. Infant mortality is defined as the death of a child before his or her first birthday, and is an important marker for population health. Top causes of infant death in Tennessee include prematurity, birth defects and unsafe sleep. TDH has partnered with hospitals and community organizations to reduce the risks of infant deaths through promotion of safe sleep practices, preconception health, prenatal care and reduction of early elective deliveries.

TDH data also show a reduction in cases of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, a condition in which a baby experiences withdrawal from a substance to which he or she was exposed during the mother's pregnancy. Tennessee became the first state to require reporting of NAS when TDH made NAS a reportable condition in 2013. In 2018, Tennessee saw the first decline in NAS since surveillance began. NAS cases decreased from 1,096 in 2017 to 927 in 2018. Learn more in the [TDH NAS Surveillance Annual Report](#).

Preventing Childhood Trauma

TDH is increasing efforts to prevent and reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, traumatic events that occur before age 18. ACEs include all types of abuse and neglect, parental mental illness, substance use, divorce, incarceration and domestic violence. Studies show a significant relationship between the number of ACEs a person experiences and a variety of negative outcomes in adulthood including poor physical and mental health, substance abuse and risky behaviors.

Recognizing that ACEs are not fate, TDH is working with partners to develop programs to prevent and mitigate ACEs by promoting safe and supportive environments for families through home visiting, family planning, WIC and training to develop trauma-informed approaches to programs and policies. TDH recently rolled out its new care coordination program Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee, or CHANT available to families through all county health departments. Learn more at www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/early-childhood-program/chant.html.

Supporting Healthy Habits

A [new report](#) ranks Tennessee first in the nation for child care licensing regulations that support healthy weight practices. TDH partners with the Tennessee Department of Human Services on the **Gold Sneaker Initiative** to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity in early childhood by enhancing health and wellness policies for licensed childcare facilities across Tennessee. Gold Sneaker-recognized childcare facilities agree to provide increased physical activity and age-appropriate nutrition for the children in their care, as well as a tobacco-free campus. Learn more at www.tn.gov/health/goldsneaker.html.

Preventing Smoke Exposure

Exposure to secondhand smoke is a serious threat to a child's health. Adults who use tobacco products are encouraged to call the **Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine**, a free service provided by the Tennessee Department of Health for personalized support for Tennesseans working to end their tobacco use. The QuitLine provides counseling and free nicotine replacement therapy to increase the chances of success. Get started by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or visiting www.tnquitline.com.

Pregnant women can get specialized help in quitting smoking through the **Baby and Me Tobacco Free** program offered at all Tennessee county health departments. Participants earn vouchers for free diapers for each month they remain tobacco-free up to one year after their babies are born. Contact [your local health department](#) for information or visit www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/baby-me-tobacco-free.html to find a location.

Join TDH in celebrating Child Health Month! Visit the event calendar at www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/mch/child-health-month-2019/chm-events-calendar.html to submit your event and find activities in your community.

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. Learn more about TDH services and programs at www.tn.gov/health.

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