

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN TENNESSEE

### The TNKIDS Initiative

The TNKIDS Initiative has been an effort to better coordinate and improve services for children. The goal was to give all children the opportunity to be successful in life by offering a safe, healthy start and an excellent education. Collaborating within State government to accomplish this goal were the Departments of Health, Children's Services, Human Services, Education, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, as well as the Commission on Children and Youth, and the Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The TNKIDS component of the Health Information Tennessee Web site has been one of the ways in which information sharing and exchange across State agencies could respond to and support the challenge to offer every child in the State a safe, healthy start and an excellent education.

The TNKIDS departments worked with the Community Health Research Group (CHRG) to establish the TNKIDS component of the Health Information Tennessee (HIT) Web site ([www.tennessee.gov/hitspot](http://www.tennessee.gov/hitspot)). This Web site, using innovative interactive programming, contains:

- □ State and county health-related data
- □ Tennessee Kids Count reports
- □ Links to National Kids Count data
- □ Information similar to Kids Count data from the departments participating in the TNKIDS Initiative
- □ County and census tract mapping of geocoded information
- □ Extensive data specific to particular departments, including education and safety.

Some of the critical issues for children's health and well-being are addressed on HIT TNKIDS and will be summarized here.

### Children in Poverty in Tennessee

- The percentage of children aged 0-17 at or below poverty level declined between 1990 and 2000, according to the U.S. Census, by 14.3%, from 21% in 1990 to 18% in 2000. Based on Census figures, 247,397 children and youth aged 0-17 were at or below poverty level in Tennessee in 2000.
- In the 2000 Census, metropolitan regions of Tennessee showed higher child poverty rates than nonmetropolitan regions, at 20% and 16.5%, respectively. Tennessee health planning regions with the highest child poverty rates in 2000 were Shelby County (23.2%), followed by Northeast and Southwest Tennessee at 20.4% each, while the lowest rates were observed for the Mid-Cumberland Region (9.9%), followed by Knox County (14.9%).