

Labor

The need for better-educated and trained workers continues, as advancements in technology and competition with overseas markets help shape Tennessee's labor market. In this rapidly changing international marketplace, it is important to recognize that individuals and families are displaced from the work force when skills and technology do not match.

The annual employment growth rate during the 11-year period of 1994 to 2005 for Tennessee will average almost 2.4 percent, well above the 1.7 percent projected for the nation as a whole (1994-2005). By the year 2005, the Tennessee economy will generate nearly 674,500 new jobs. Overall, employment in the state will increase by 26 percent from the 1994 employment level of 2,610,630. Tennessee employers and the work force need to be prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century (*State of Tennessee Outlooks in Brief*).

Unemployment rates for Tennessee as of August 1998 were at 4.2 percent, in contrast to 5.5 percent in August of 1997. The 23.6 percent drop in the unemployment rate indicates a healthy economy for Tennesseans. The 4.2 percent rate is still below the August 1998 national average of 4.5 percent.

Tennessee's county unemployment rates range from 15.9 in Haywood County to 1.8 percent in Williamson County.

The lack of employment has an impact on children and families through diminished financial resources, increased stress on family life, and the potential for homelessness. It is also important to recognize that the Tennessee counties with high unemployment rates are rural counties with fewer resources.

Youth Labor Force

Tennessee's youth labor force is estimated as 158,010 youth between the ages of 16-19, with 84.7 percent employed and 15.3 percent unemployed. The rate of unemployment for teens in Tennessee ranges from 3.8 percent in Cannon County to 43.8 percent in Houston County, according to 1996 averages.

In October 1997, the Tennessee Department of Employment Security instituted the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program that gives a

