

Foreword

KIDS COUNT: The State of the Child in Tennessee is published by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth with partial funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. TCCY thanks them for their support but acknowledges that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the agency alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation funds a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. At the national level, the principal activity of the initiative is the publication of the annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which uses the best available data to measure the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children and their families. The Foundation funds statewide KIDS COUNT projects in the 50 states, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) is an independent state agency created by the Tennessee General Assembly to advocate for improvements in the quality of life for children and families, coordinate regional councils on children and youth, administer state and federal juvenile justice funds, evaluate services to children in state custody, and compile and disseminate information on Tennessee's children.

Data used in this publication were collected from various state and federal agencies and represent the most current data available at the time of the publication.

The 2003 report represents an abbreviated version of our publications from previous years. This report illustrates the importance of providing services for infants and children, beginning prenatally through the pre-kindergarten years. Supports for parents provided at a community level can mean success or failure for children when looking at the long-term outcomes. Children need strong supports that provide physical and emotional nurturing, education, and adequate financial support to promote success.

Tennessee children face many challenges in the coming years. With changes in the health care delivery system, a lack of adequate jobs for parents, new requirements for schools, and a lack of dollars to go around for all needs, choices will be made. TCCY promotes the betterment of our children so that **all** children have an equal opportunity to succeed.

TCCY wants to thank its friends and staff members who shared pictures of the children they love for this book.