



Department of  
**Human Services**

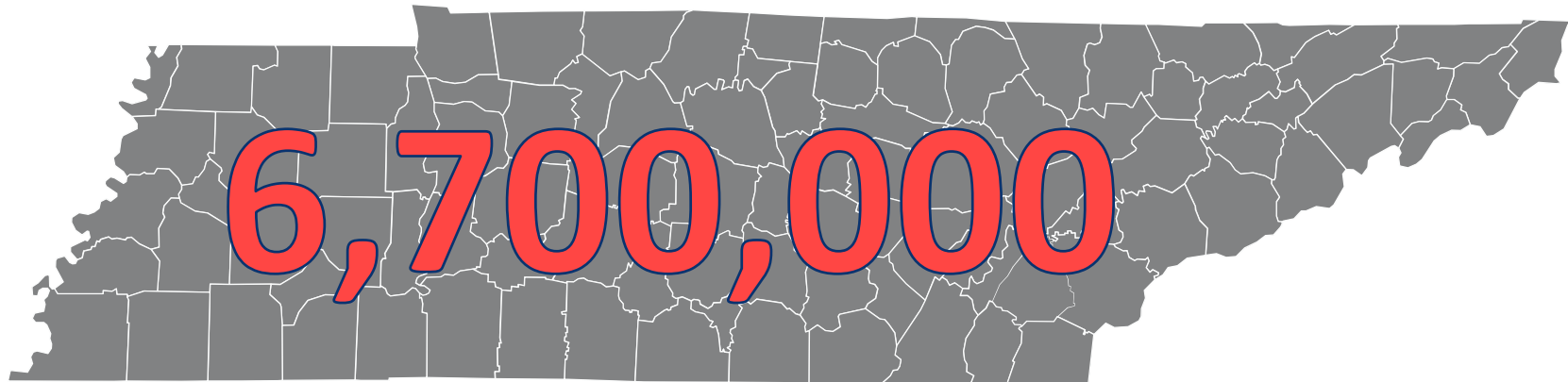
# Smart Steps

## Child Care Payment Assistance Program

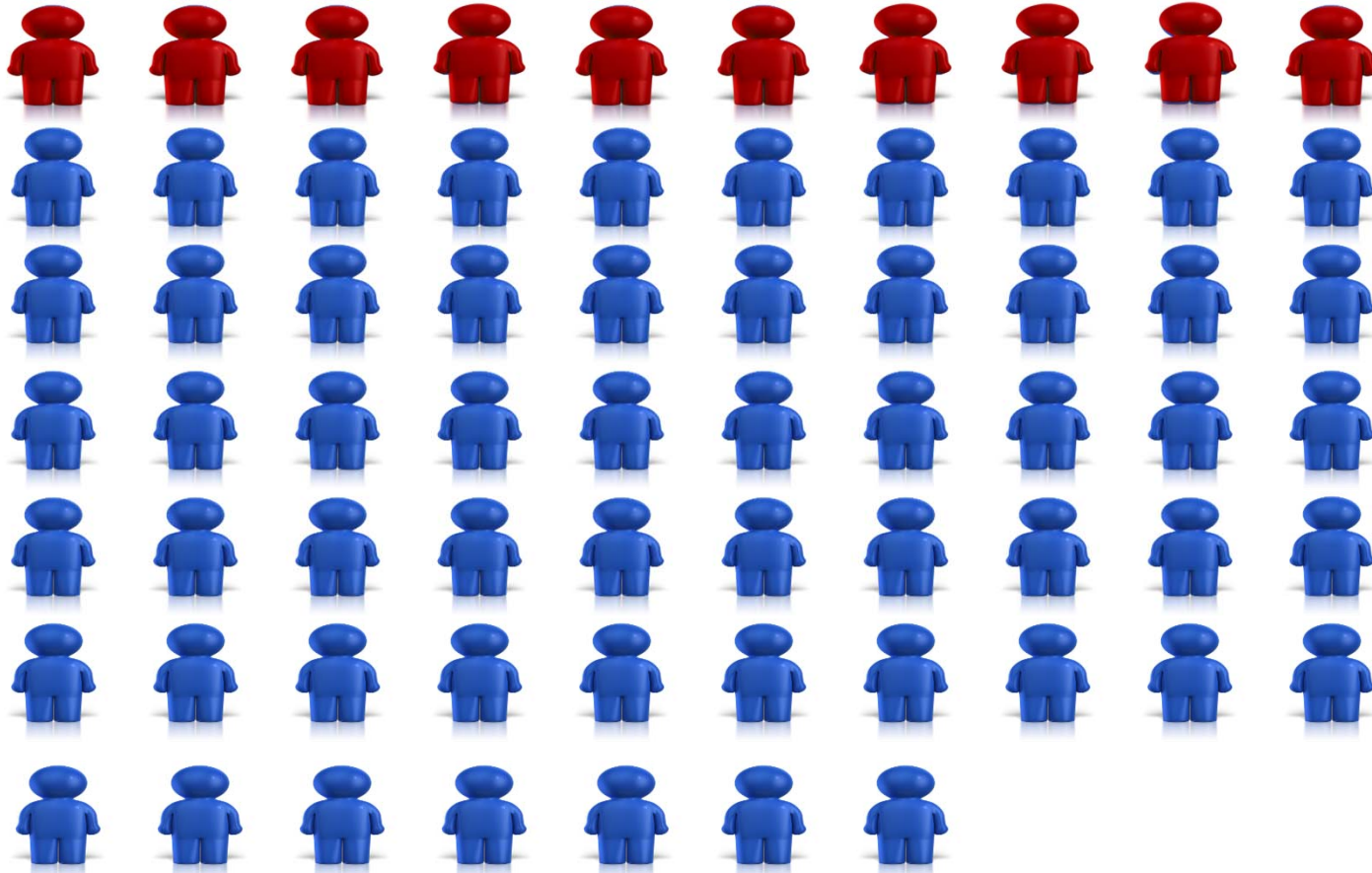
Cherrell Campbell-Street, Deputy Commissioner, Programs & Services  
Gwen Laaser, Child Care Certificate Program Director

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

# The State of Tennessee



# Poverty in the State of Tennessee

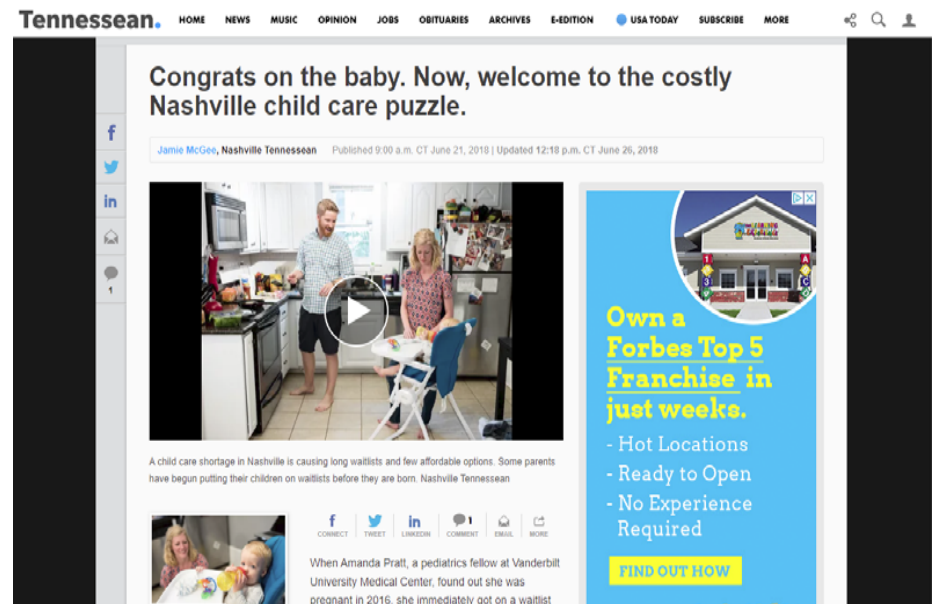


 = 100,000 people living in poverty

# Cost of Child Care in the State of Tennessee



*The Nashville Scene*  
Published June 28, 2018



*The Tennessean*  
Published June 21, 2018

# Child Care Doesn't Come Cheap



Infant Care Averages  
\$8,524 per year



Toddler Care  
Averages \$8,021  
per year



Preschool  
Averages \$7,290  
per year



School-Age  
Averages \$4,580  
per year



# Cost of Child Care in the State of Tennessee

What percentage do families of low-income spend on child care?



# Affordable Child Care - An Essential Need For Families Across the Nation

**Median Household Income = \$46,574**  
**Annual Income for Minimum Wage Job**  
**(\$7.25 per hour) = \$15,080**

Families need child care:

- In order to work consistently and reliably
- To pursue educational goals to further their family's success

# Tennessee Families Need Affordable Child Care



## Meet Destini



# Existing Child Care Options and Challenges

- Families apply only for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for the child care component.
- Many applicants made too much money to qualify for TANF, but too little money to realistically afford child care.
- This has left thousands of families without an essential resource.



# Smart Steps



# Tennessee's Solution: Smart Steps

The **Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance Program** began in 2016 and was developed to meet the needs of families who are working or in post-secondary education programs who do not qualify for TANF but still need child care support and/or increased earning potential through post secondary programs.



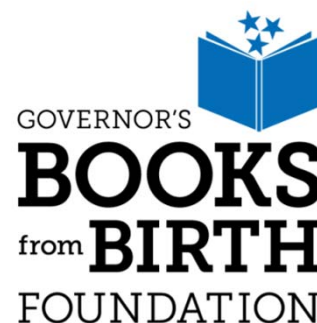
# Smart Steps Features

## Supports whole family

- Financial assistance for parents working and pursuing educational goals. Parents are responsible for a co-pay for their child's care.
- Promotes learning and development for children in a quality child care setting.

## Aligns with state educational initiatives

- Drive to 55
- Tennessee Reconnect
- Early Literacy



# Smart Steps Features

Smart Steps is portable – the child care assistance moves with the family, so parents can pursue educational and work opportunities across the state.

Parents are encouraged to focus on programs for their children that reinforce:

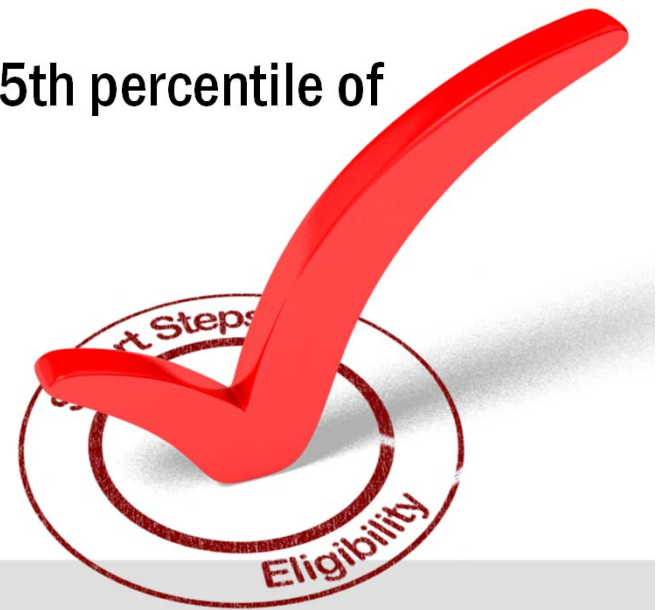
- Social/emotional well-being
- Developmentally appropriate learning
- Safe and healthy environments
- Stable and nurturing environments
- Promotes early learning for educational success – encourages participation in early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K





# Smart Steps Eligibility Requirements

- Must be employed no less than 30 hours per week, or be enrolled and attending a post-secondary education program full time or a combination of employment and post-secondary education
- Must have a child between ages six (6) weeks through five (5) years old
- Household gross income must be below the 85th percentile of the State Median Income for Tennessee

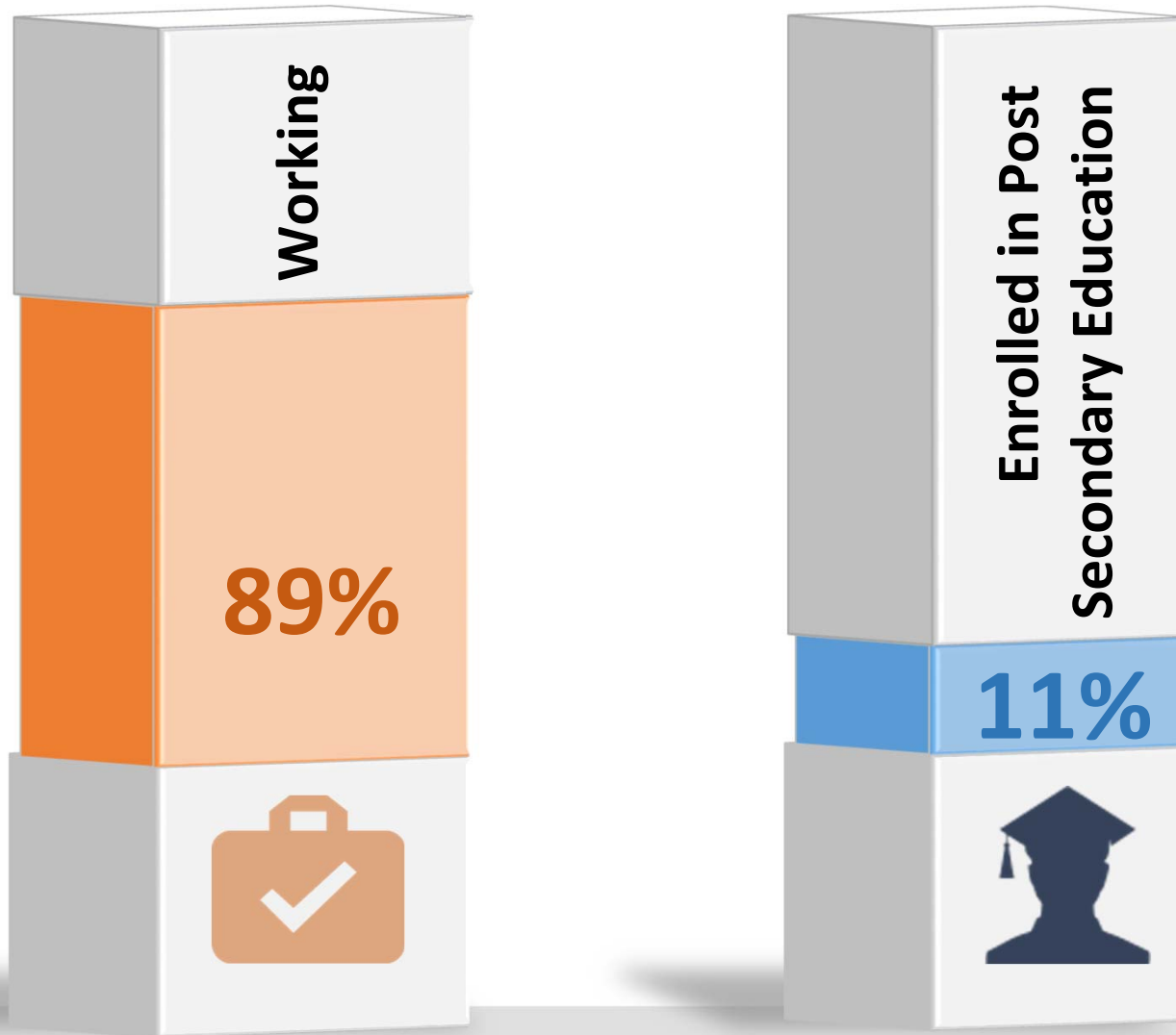


# Making it Work

- Since 2016, \$37 million has been invested in the program, from the federal Child Care and Development Fund.
- The Tennessee Child Care Management System is the main database used to support Smart Steps.
- Existing child care certificate program staff took on processing Smart Steps applications, so there was no additional operational cost.



# Smart Steps Making an Impact



# Smart Steps Making an Impact

Children served since 2016



## Slide 17

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**DS3**

Add graphic

Devin Stone, 7/16/2018



# Existing Child Care Options and Challenges



**TANF**



**Smart Steps**

# Smart Steps Video



Building a  
Thriving  
Tennessee