



Center of Excellence
for Learning Sciences
2023 Annual Report



Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences
Tennessee State University
Nashville, Tennessee
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www.tnstate.edu/learningsciences

2023 Annual Report Issue 9

This annual report is published by the Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences at Tennessee State University for faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Nashville community.

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Tennessee State University Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences 2023 Annual Report

About the Center

Through the Academics–Research–Service model, the Center works together with academic institutions, community–based service organizations, and government agencies to promote learning and strengthen communities.

The partnerships between the Center and state organizations have a multidisciplinary mission that focuses primarily on the needs of Tennessee but is national in scope.

A few of the accomplishments of these partnerships include: (1) creating programs and projects which impact the quality of early childhood programs for Tennessee’s children, especially those within communities of highest need; (2) intensive training for those providing family support services; and (3) influence on public policy.

About Tennessee State University

Founded in 1912, Tennessee State University (TSU) fosters scholarly inquiry and research, lifelong learning, and a commitment to service.

Tennessee State University is an 1890 land–grant institution and Nashville’s only comprehensive public university, as well as Middle Tennessee’s first public Carnegie Doctoral/Research institution. The university has two convenient locations – a 450–acre main campus, with more than 65 buildings, located in a residential setting; and the Avon Williams Building located in the heart of downtown, near the center of the Nashville business and government district. TSU has demonstrated expertise as a robust educational and entrepreneurial research engine with a continuous positive impact on the economic tapestry of Nashville, the State of Tennessee, region and nation. The university offers unparalleled research, produces workforce–prepared talent, and provides educational and technical assistance services to industries, communities, and businesses worldwide.

About this Annual Report

This annual report covers the period from July 2022 to June 2023 unless otherwise indicated. The report represents progress of the programs housed within the Center and includes specific events and program data. It summarizes the specific projects and programs that the Center has engaged in over the past year, but as with any summary, it does not fully capture the range and depth of activities undertaken. To more fully explore the Center, its mission and programs, visit our website at www.tnstate.edu/learningsciences.

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Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences (COELS)

Here's what we've been up to in 2023

The Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences at Tennessee State University aims to conduct research that addresses the needs and priorities of the educational community through academic and professional development programs, service programs, community partnerships, and training/technical assistance programs.

COELS is one of 26 centers established by action of the Tennessee General Assembly in 1984 to expand research and contribute to the overall economic and community development base of the state.



DR. KIMBERLY SMITH
Director, Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences

Program Highlights

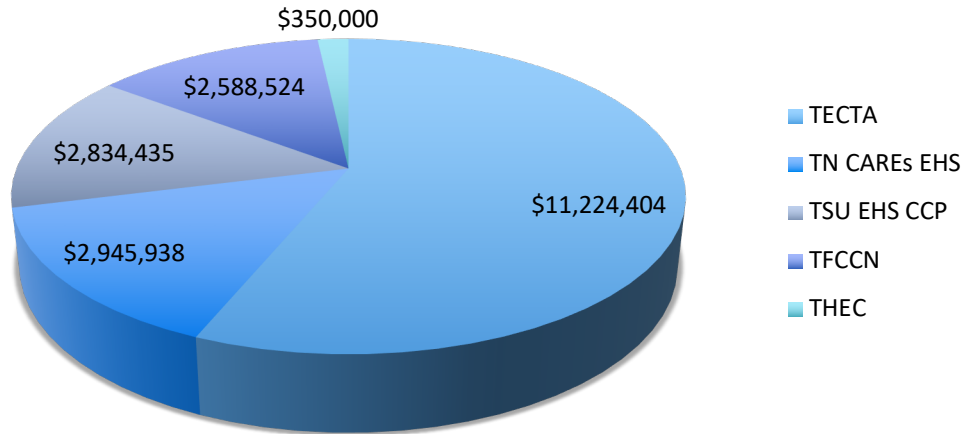
The Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences aims to build the capacities to strengthen communities through education. As a non-instructional unit of the Division of Research and Sponsored Programs, our Center is committed to providing a creative, collaborative environment and the facilities to conduct significant research studies and manage programs that promote the physical, educational, and psychological well-being of all children and families.

The Center was again awarded close to \$20 million in funding, making it the second highest funded department at the University. Our commitment to fostering a vibrant learning community included a series of online workshops, statewide conferences, and online training platforms for educators and students to engage in meaningful professional development.

Through our core model of Academics-Research-Service, we strive to provide enhanced educational opportunities for all ages, conduct and disseminate research, and promote innovative training programs for staff in education, human services, social services, and other fields. We are planning for more of these opportunities in 2024 with improved online training and professional development, new research studies, expanded community service and support programs, and new credentials, apprenticeship programs, and program accreditation opportunities.

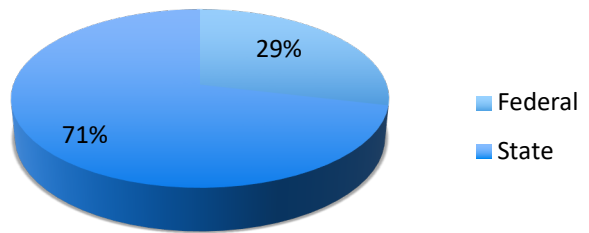
Total Funding by Program

The Center secured a total of **\$19,943,301** for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.



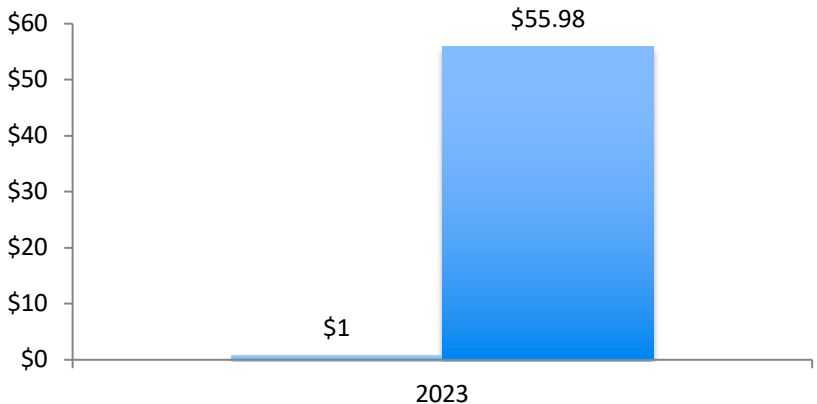
Total Percentage by Funding Source

Over one quarter (29%) of the total funding came from federal agencies. Seventy-one percent (71%) was secured from state-level departments.



THEC Appropriations and Return on Investment

As one of Tennessee's 26 Centers of Excellence, the Center receives annual funding from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). For FY 2023, every dollar invested by THEC provided a return of \$55.98.



Academic and Professional Development Programs

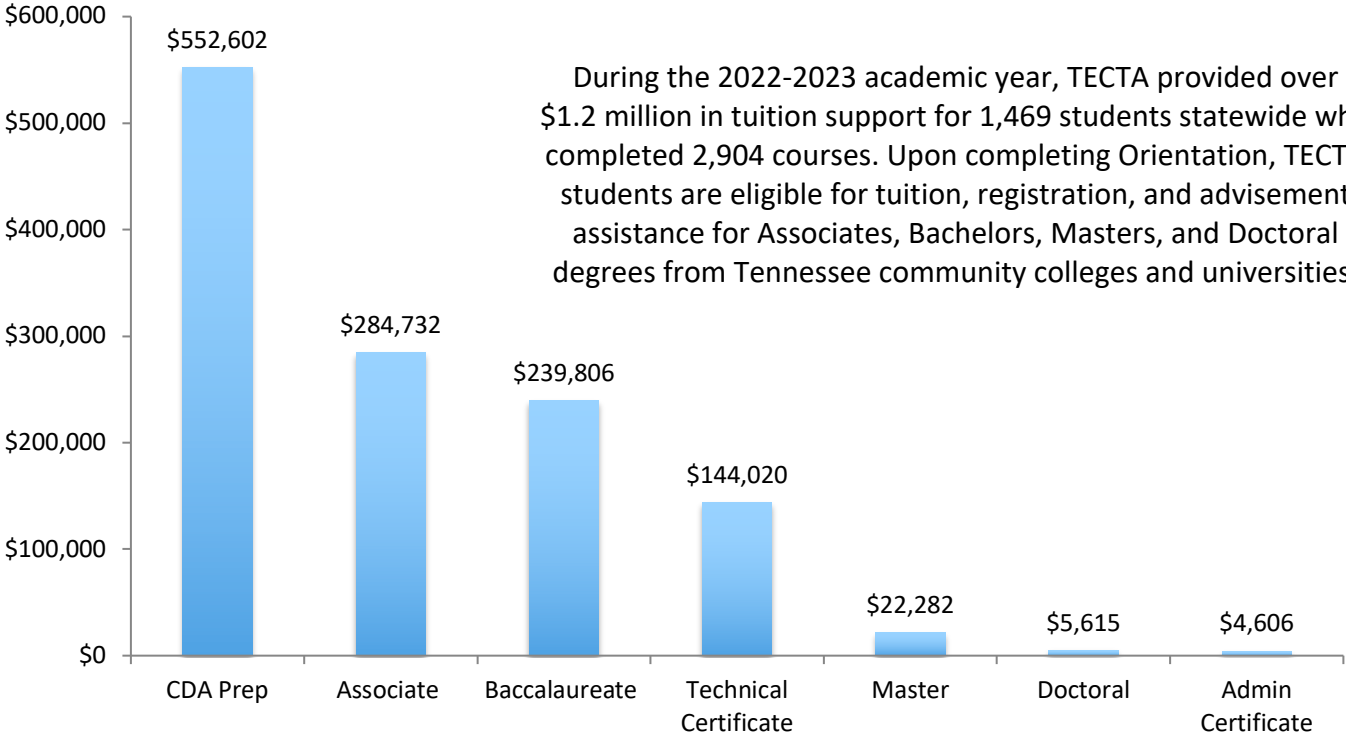
Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA) Statewide Management Office

Since 1992, TECTA has provided high quality professional learning through free training and academic tuition support to thousands of Tennesseans in the early care and education workforce. The TECTA program maintains a diverse student/participant body, many of whom are working in minimum wage jobs. TECTA’s workforce support includes a basic 30-hour non-credit bearing orientation course and financial support for academic courses that articulate from the Associates to Baccalaureate level and beyond. childhood workforce. Overall, TECTA provides professional development opportunities and supports public policy and services, which improve the quality of care for Tennessee’s children.

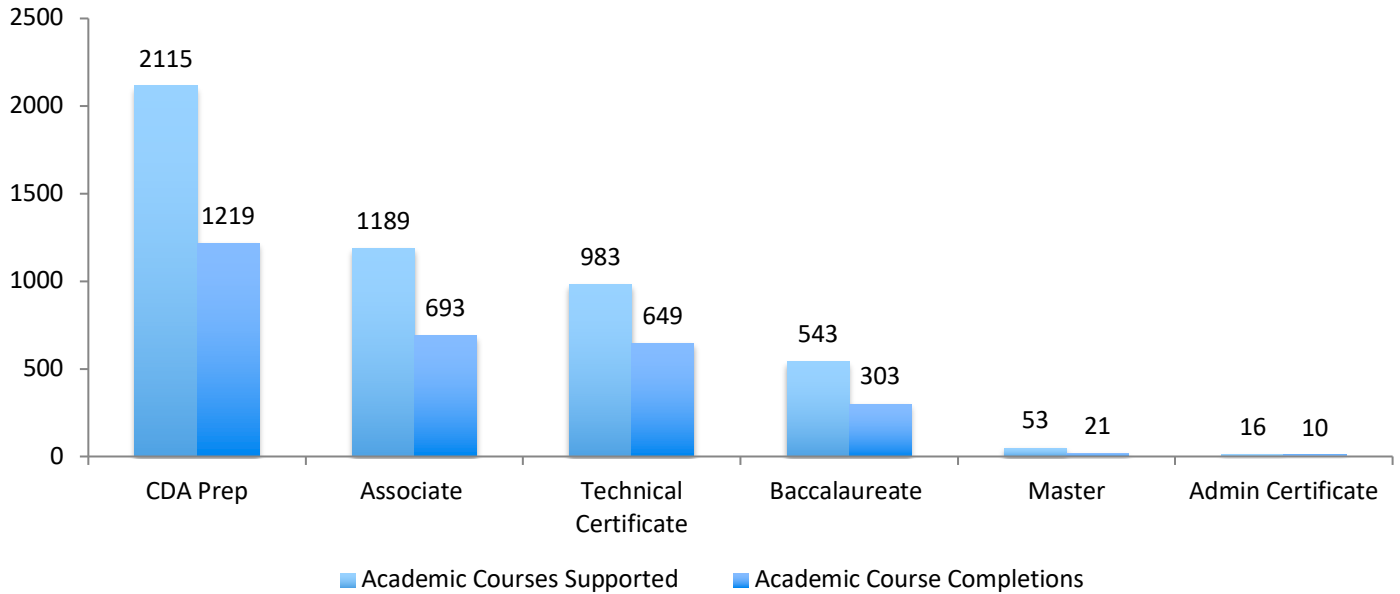


BELVA WEATHERSBY
Statewide Program Director, TECTA

TECTA Tuition Support for Higher Education FY October 2022 – September 2023

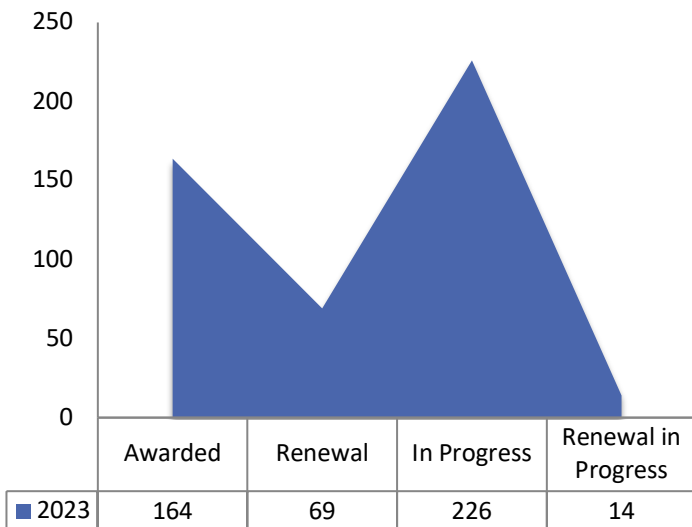


Academic Support by Education Level FY October 2022 – September 2023



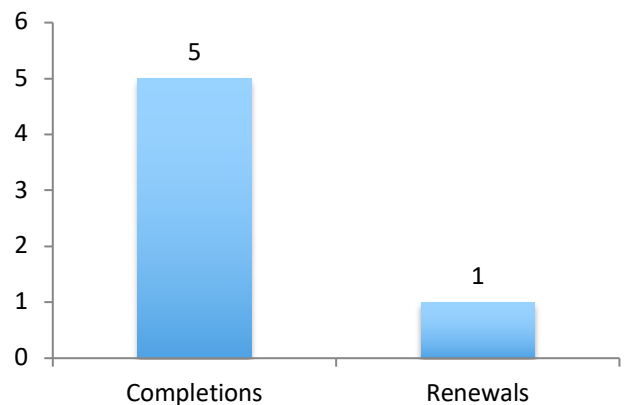
Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential Support FY October 2022 – September 2023

The Council for Professional Recognition awards the Child Development Associate® Credential. A CDA assistance program is coordinated with the TECTA local offices to provide competency-based instruction, supervised field experiences, and advisement to caregivers.



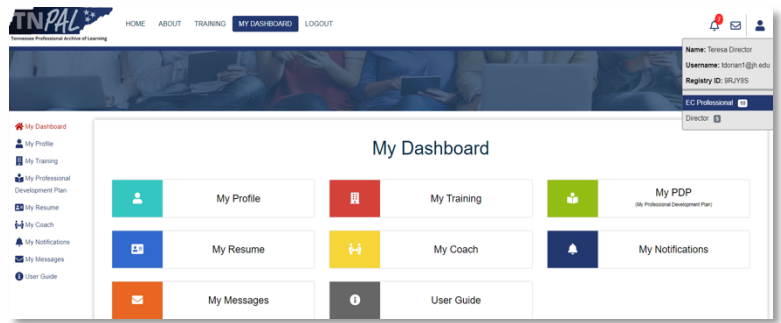
TECPAC Credentials Awarded Statewide by Type FY October 2022 – September 2023

Since 2008 the Center has awarded almost 250 Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credentials (TECPAC) to child care program directors. These program directors demonstrate specific competencies for effective leadership and management based on academic achievement, effective experience, program assessments, and a portfolio assessment. The Center awards the Administrator Credential upon completion of the Academy and assessments of the child care facilities.

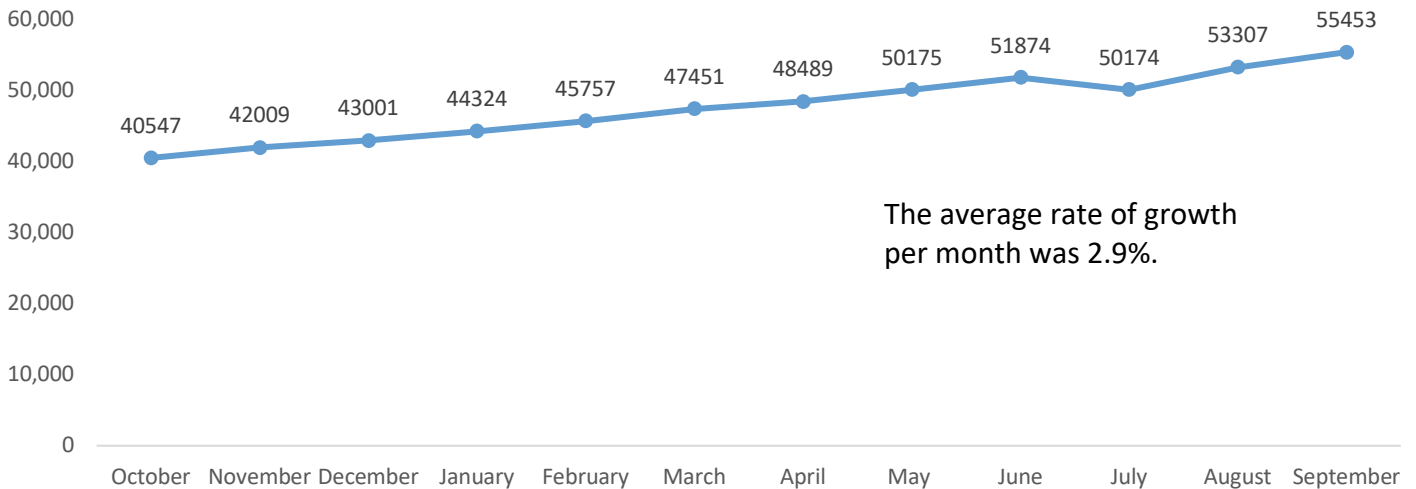


Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL)

The Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning is an online registry for early childhood educators working in licensed child care programs in Tennessee. Users can create individual profiles to document and support their training and professional development, list their professional accomplishments, upload certificates and credentials, develop a professional development plan and track their progress, and more. TNPAL is the central repository for the Tennessee early childhood workforce to align professional development plans with training activities in one platform.



Total Number of Educators and Directors using TNPAL FY October 2022 – September 2023



TNPAL Users by Type FY October 2022 – September 2023



- 52,818 Early Childhood Educators
- 2,635 Child Care Program Directors
- 2,280 Child Care Agencies
- 225 Coaches
- 180 DHS Licensing Consultants

Research Projects

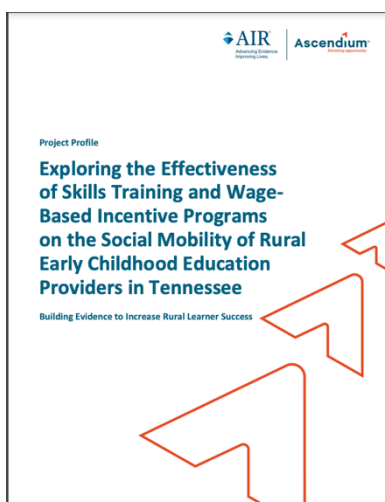
Over the past 30 years, the Center has conducted several major research projects including the nationally lauded Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio, or STAR Study, which was a four-year study to determine the extent class size affects students' learning in Kindergarten through third grade. The follow-up Lasting Benefits Study examined the sustained benefits of K-3 small classes on students from fourth through twelfth grade including academic achievement, school participation, and graduation rates. The Center has received two multi-million dollar National Science Foundation awards, both to study science achievement and teacher development in elementary schools.



DR. CELESTE BROWN
Associate Research Director,
Center of Excellence for
Learning Sciences

Discovering the Keys to Rural Learner Success

The Center of Excellence has partnered with Digital Promise on a new research project titled "Building Evidence to Increase Rural Learner Success." The project will explore the factors associated with educational and employment advancement among Tennessee's rural child care educators. The project team will utilize data from the TECTA program and collect first-hand testimonials from child care educators themselves. The proposal one of seven selected from a national search for projects focused on rural postsecondary education research. Funding is provided by Ascendium with support from American Institutes of Research (AIR).



This research study by Digital Promise focuses on early childhood education providers working in licensed facilities who live or work in rural areas of Tennessee.

Expanding TECTA's Impact

This year, TECTA concluded research to uncover ways to expand services and increase the number of early educators using its services. The research report titled "Options for Expanding TECTA's Impact: A Review of State and National Early Care and Education Workforce Initiatives" by Debra J. Ackerman, PhD, provides a comprehensive analysis of various state and national initiatives aimed at enhancing the early care and education workforce. Dr. Ackerman delves into the challenges and opportunities within TECTA (Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance) and explores potential strategies for expanding its impact.

This research report serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and advocates in the field of early childhood education, offering insights into best practices and potential avenues for expanding the positive impact of TECTA and similar initiatives nationwide.

To view the full report, visit www.tnstate.edu/learningsciences/research.

Service Programs and Community Partnerships

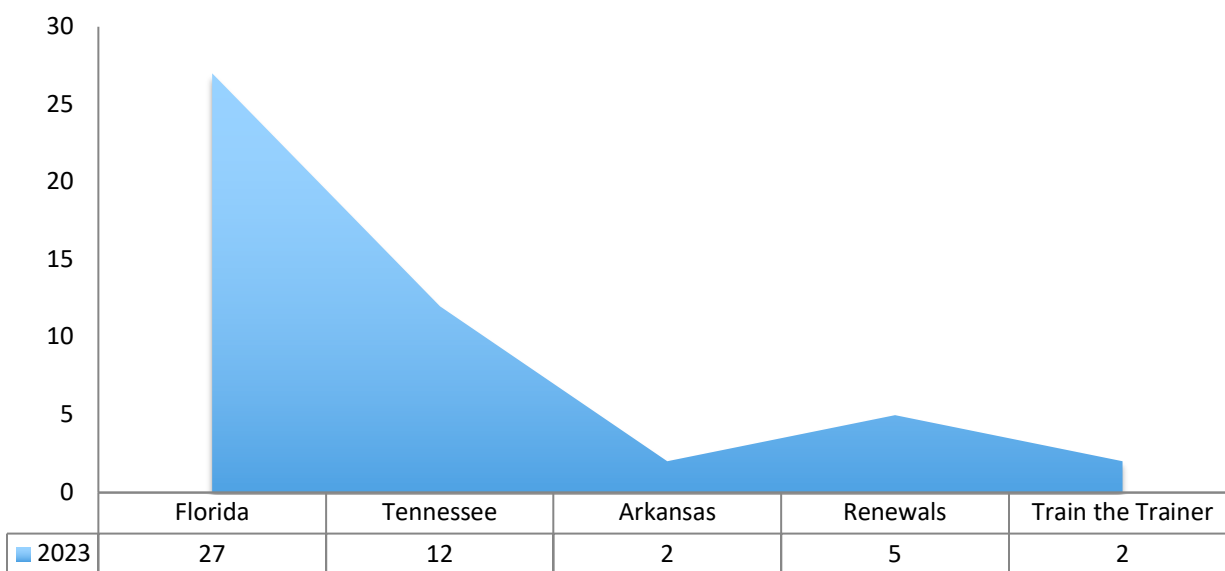
Social Services Competency Based Training (SSCBT) Program

SSCBT is a competency-based program designed to improve the knowledge and skills of human service workers in Head Start community action programs and social service agencies across the country. It is specifically designed as an intensive training for those with limited social work experience and is structured to align with the Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies for Staff Working with Families including 25 functional areas and 64 competency-based lessons. The program serves those providing family support services including case managers, home visitors, teachers, health services staff, and community workers. Undergraduate college credit is available through Tennessee State University and the Center awards the SSCBT Credential upon completion of the program wherein participants are required to renew every two years.



AMY LAIRD
Program Manager, SSCBT

**SSCBT Credentials Awarded by Type
FY July 2022 – June 2023**



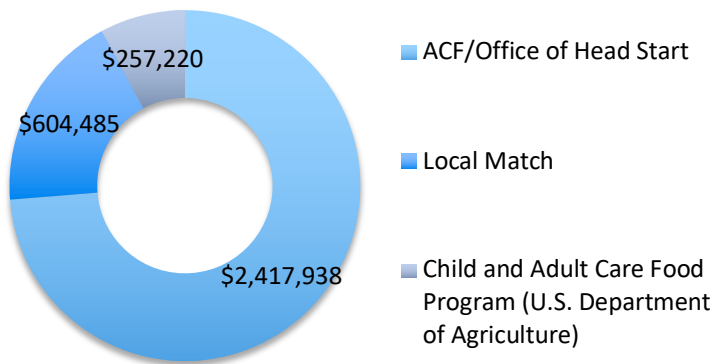
Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Program

Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start is a federally funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women. The Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start program has provided coordinated comprehensive, intensive, and continuous support services to enable families to attain self-sufficiency since 1995, when the University was one of 11 programs selected nationwide to establish Early

Head Start centers. The program currently supports six child care centers across Henry, Gibson, and Weakley counties in west Tennessee while recognizing the integrity and unique needs of these families and children.

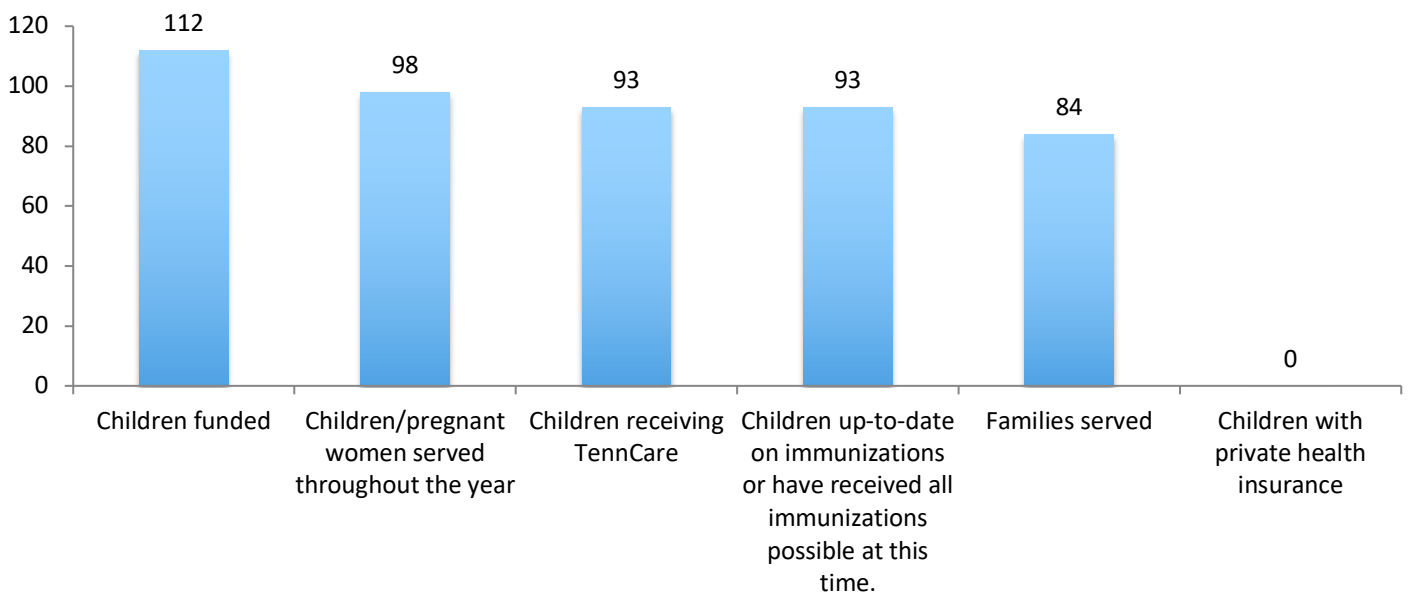
Total Program Funding by Source

Funding for FY 2023 totaled \$3,279,643.

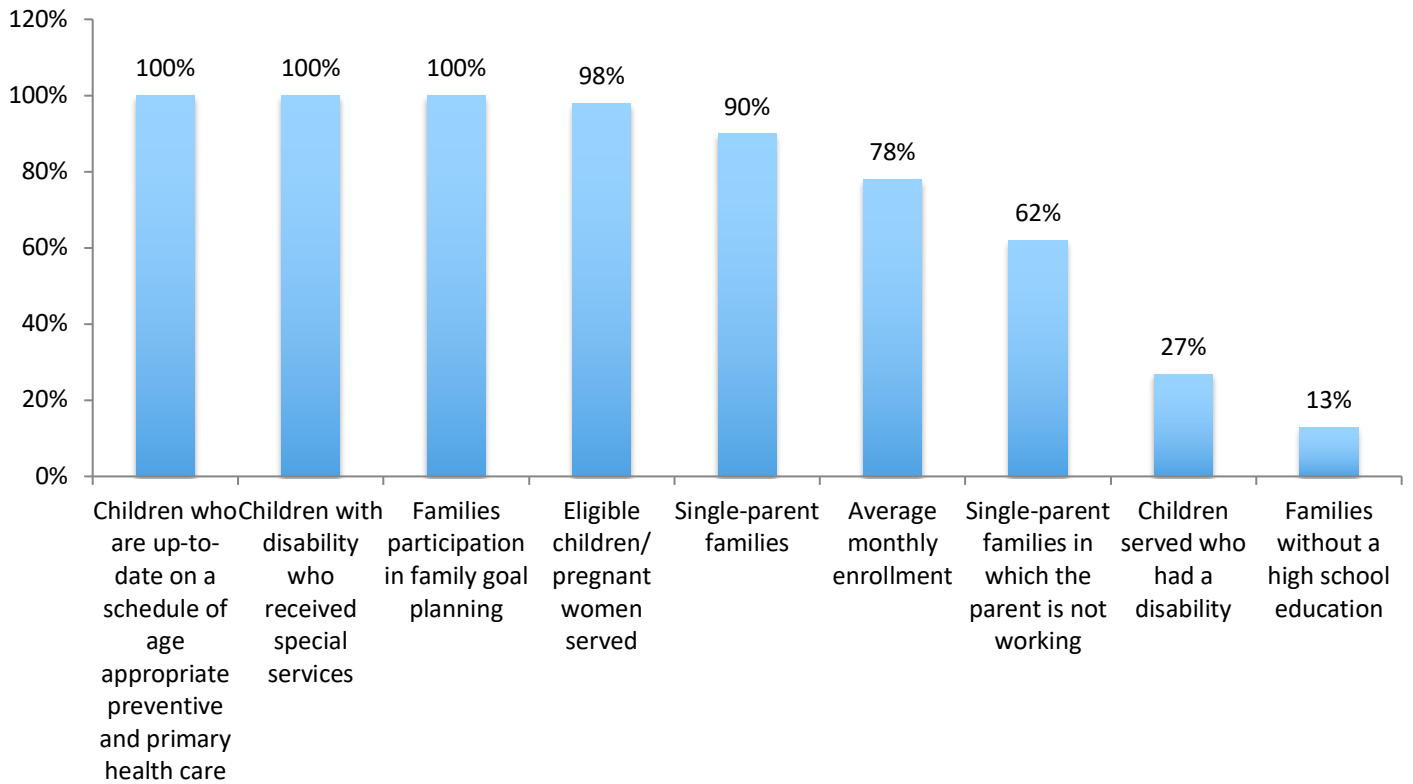


TAMARA BARNHILL
Program Director,
Tennessee State University
Early Head Start Programs

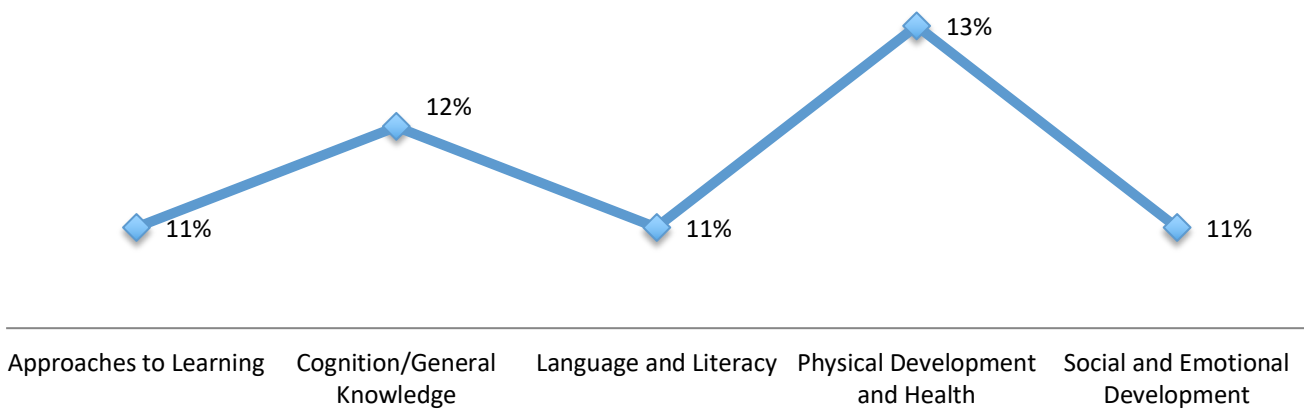
Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Statistics FY 2023



Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Statistics, continued FY 2023



2022-2023 School Readiness Improvement Percentage of Growth during the Program Year



Tennessee State University Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership

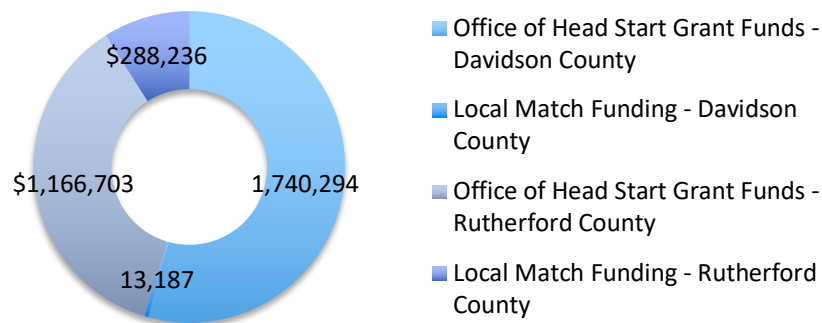
In FY 2014, Congress appropriated \$500 million to allow existing Early Head Start programs to partner with local child care centers and family child care providers serving infants and toddlers from low-income families, beginning with 275 grantees.

In 2015, The Center was one of the first of these programs in the nation to be awarded funding to partner Early Head Start programs with child care centers in the north Nashville community and later

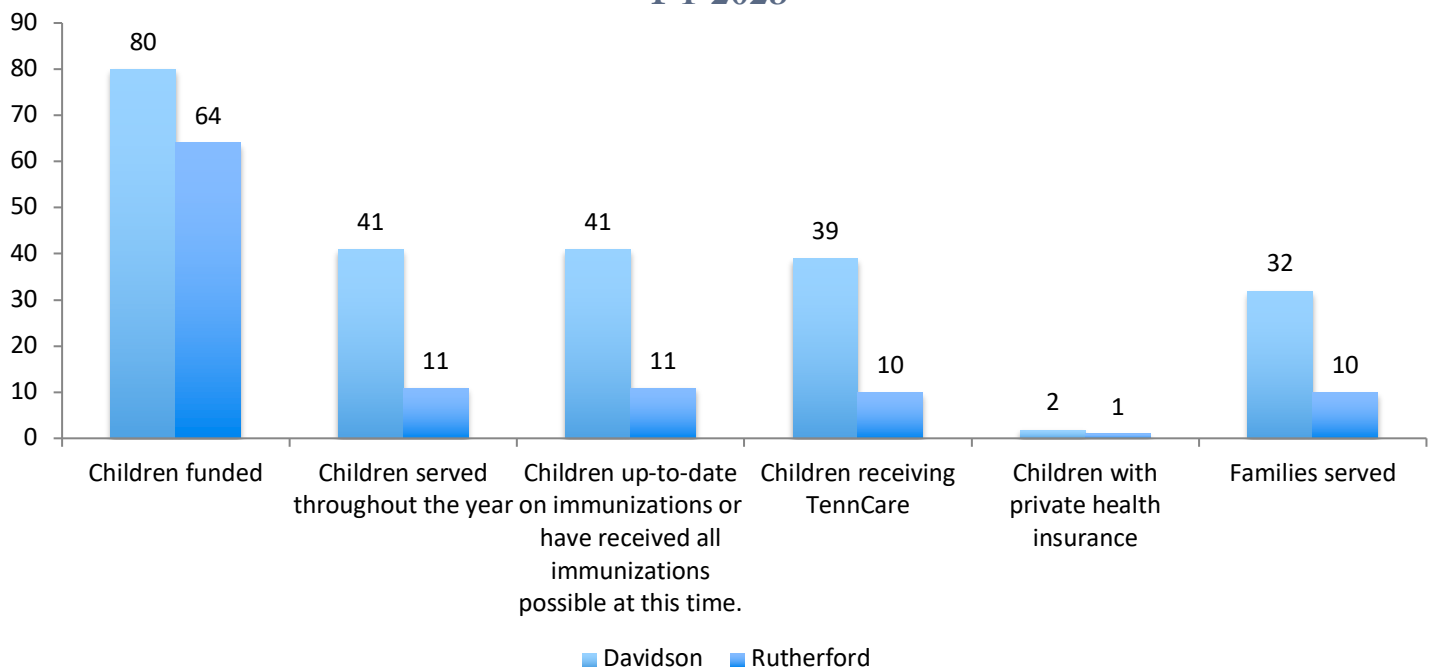
expanded to centers in Rutherford County. This project is funded by the Office of Head Start under the direction of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program’s goals encompass successful health, economic and educational outcomes and long-term academic success for children.

Total Program Funding by Source

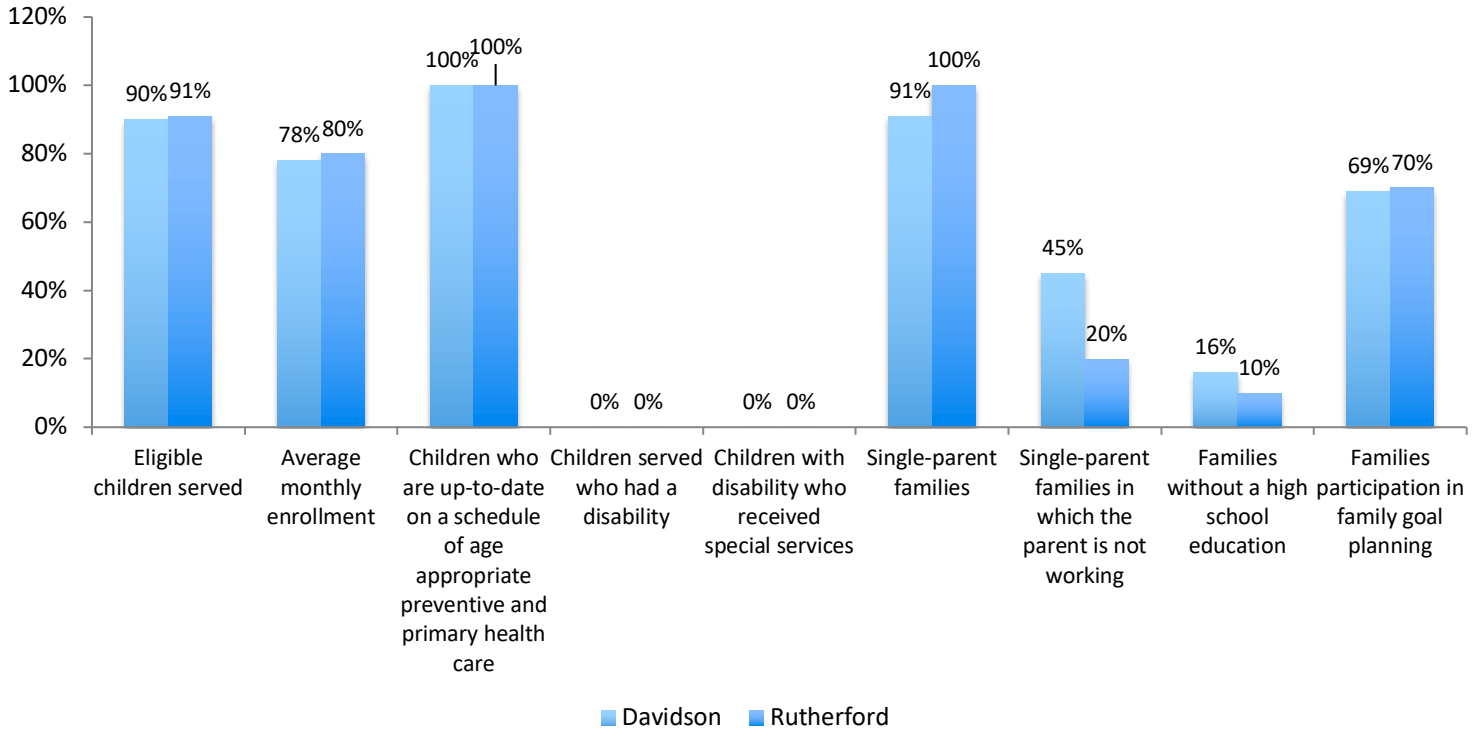
Funding for FY 2023 totaled \$3,208,420.



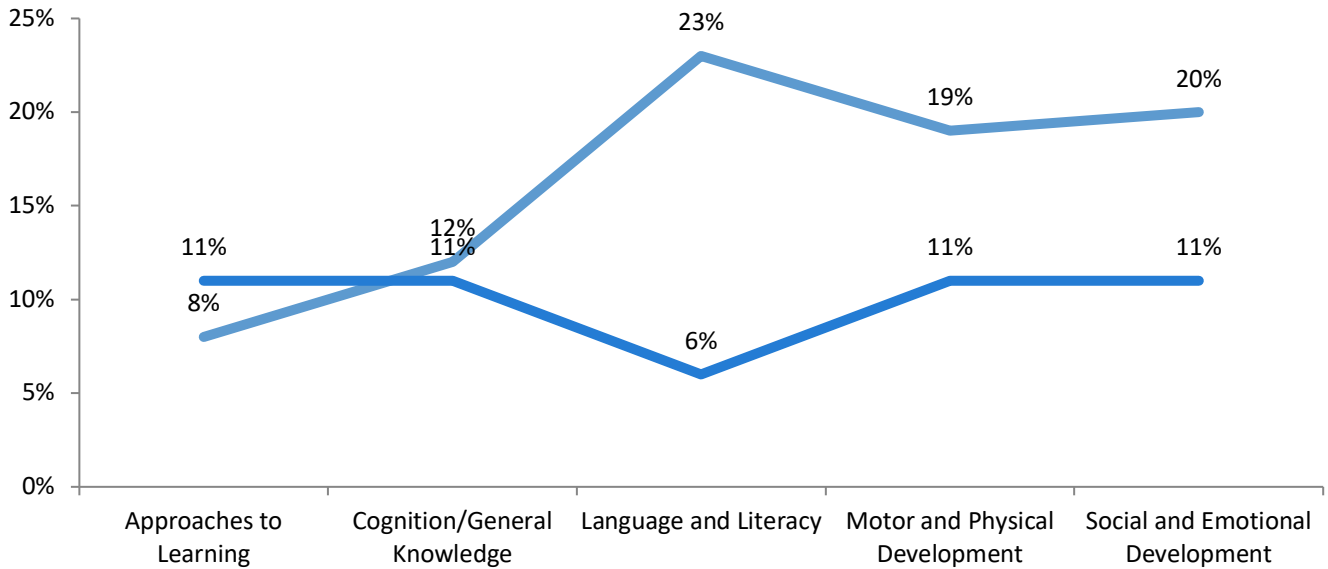
Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Statistics FY 2023



Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Statistics, continued FY 2023



2022-2023 School Readiness Improvement Percentage of Growth during the Program Year



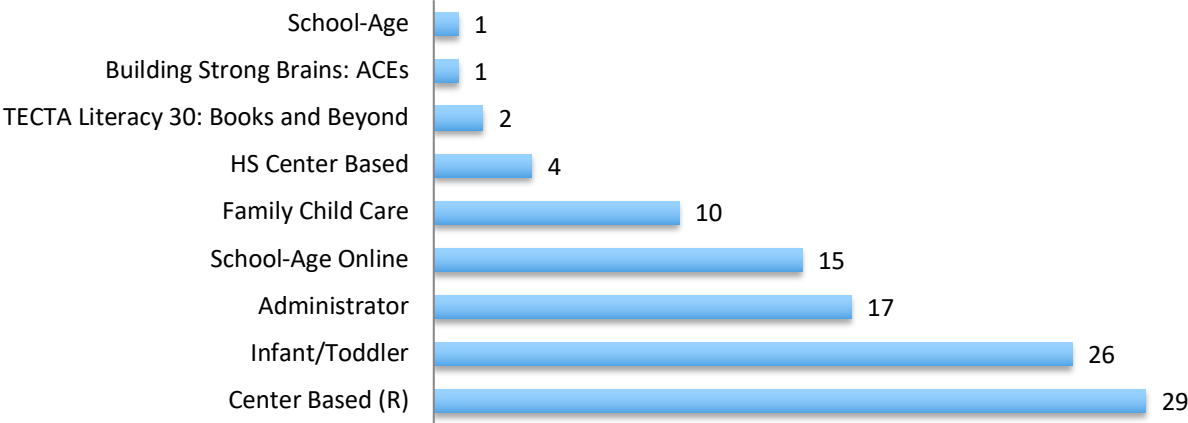
Training and Technical Assistance Programs

TECTA Orientation

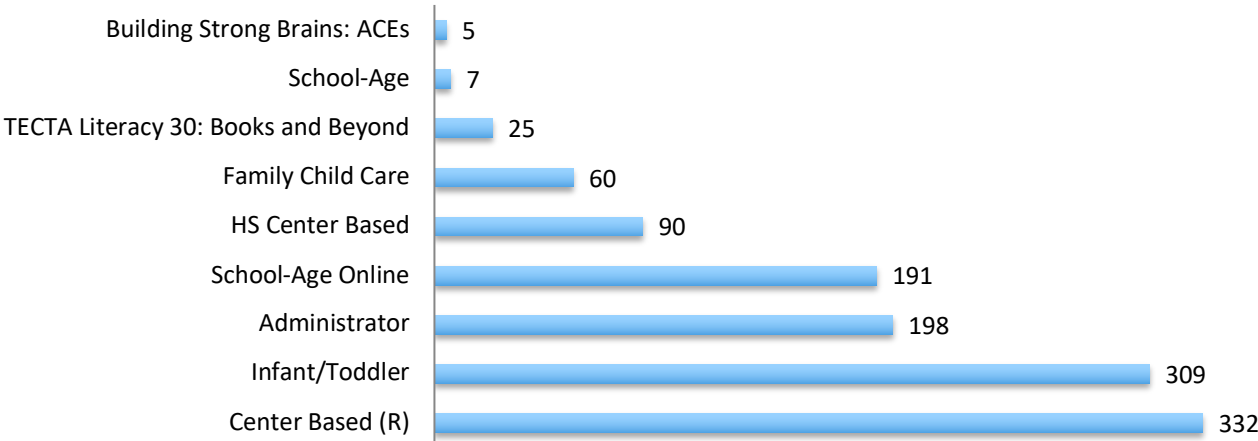
TECTA Orientation is a free 30-hour training program with a curriculum centered on five specializations: Center-Based, Infant/Toddler, Family Child Care, School-Age, and Administrator. TECTA Orientation teaches core knowledge and best practices through in-person and online modules

that incorporate professional core competencies based on state and national standards of quality. Completion of the Orientation program provides an academic pathway to Early Childhood Education coursework with tuition support at state colleges and universities.

Total TECTA Orientations Held Statewide by Type
 FY October 2022 – September 2023

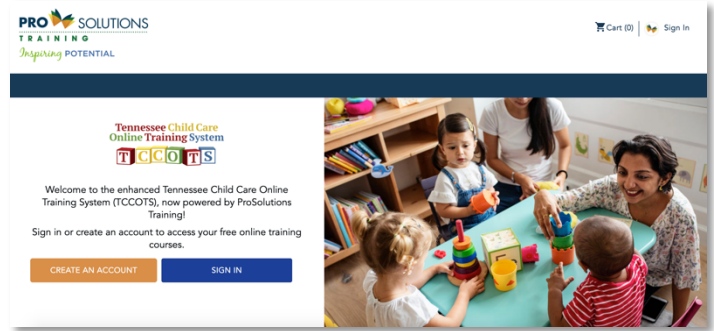


Total TECTA Orientation Completions Statewide by Type
 FY October 2022 – September 2023



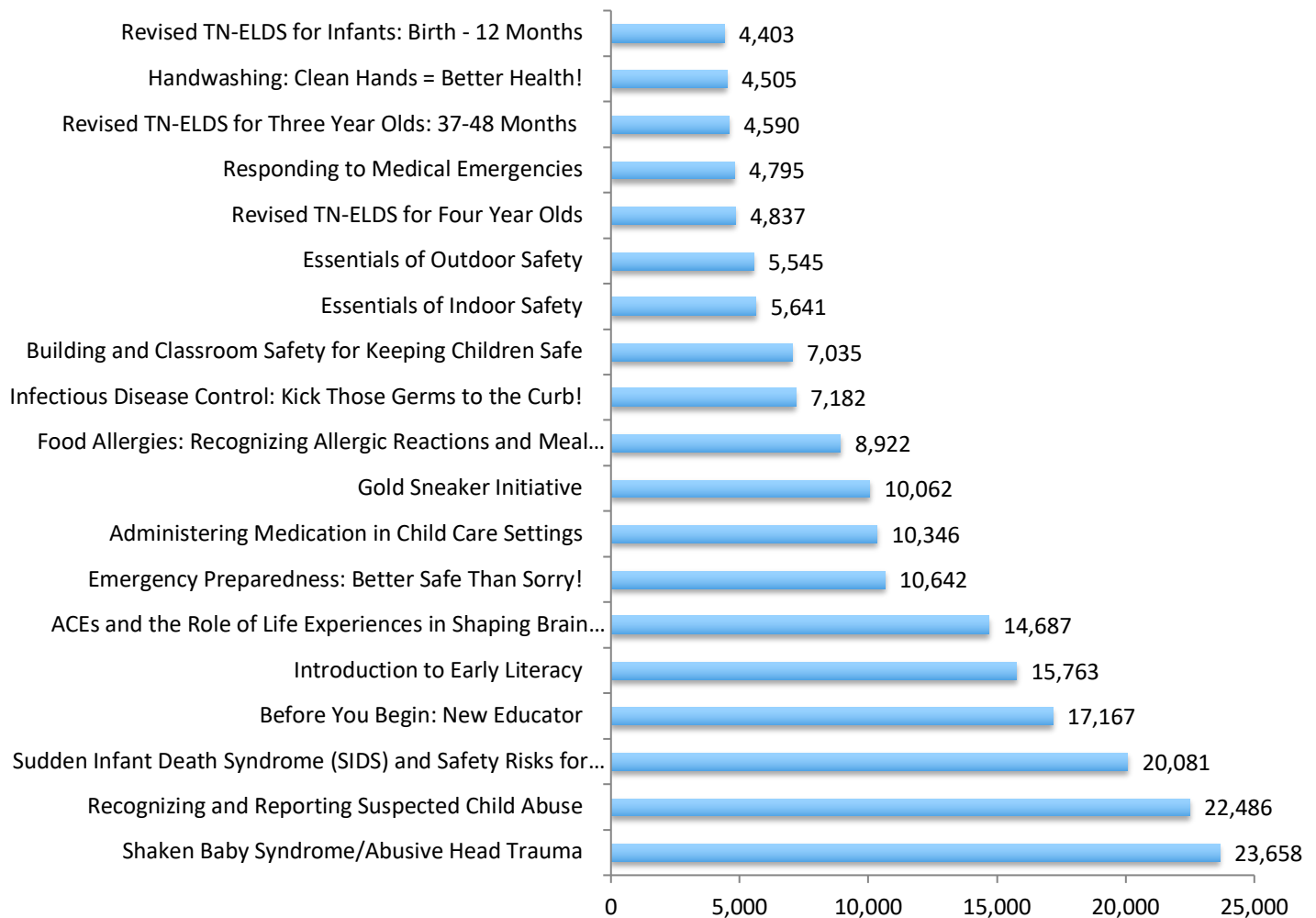
Tennessee Child Care Online Training System (TCCOTS)

The Tennessee Child Care Online Training System, or TCCOTS, is a learning portal designed by Early Childhood professionals that combines high-quality Early Childhood content with the convenience of an online training program. Under the contractual agreement with the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TN-DHS) and the Center/TECTA, TCCOTS is a service managed by ProSolutions that provides the TN-DHS licensed child care workforce with online professional development.



A total of 269,776 certificates were issued on the platform across 68 modules in both English and Spanish. Access to TCCOTS training is available at www.tccots.com.

TCCOTS Statewide Training Completions Completion Certificates Issued > 4,000 by Module in FY 2023



Tennessee Family Child Care Network (TFCCN)

The Tennessee Family Child Care Network (TFCCN) is a comprehensive program that provides a range of services to support family child care providers, helping them to provide quality care that promotes children's growth and development. TFCCN is dedicated to improving the quantity and quality of child care in Tennessee and to providing families with access to safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate care. To encourage the growth of licensed family child care programs TFCCN offers ongoing technical assistance to ensure that providers maintain quality standards, delivers support and assistance to providers becoming licensed and/or accredited, and offers high-quality training and resources through a staff of regional Advisors and Specialists.



SUJATA DUKES
Program Director, TFCCN

Management of TFCCN ended September 2023. The statewide family child care support network activities are currently managed by Signal Centers.

TFCCN Quality Improvement Initiatives FY October 2022 – September 2023

These continuing education opportunities included professional trainings and conferences.

Total FCC Support Group Meetings Held	89
Total Providers at FCC Support Group Meetings	852
Total Roundtable Discussions Held	6
Total No. Providers at Roundtable Discussions	186
Total No. Providers at Technical CDA Classes	58
Total Providers at Regional Conferences	158
Total Providers at State Conference	106

Family Child Care Engagement FY October 2022 – September 2023

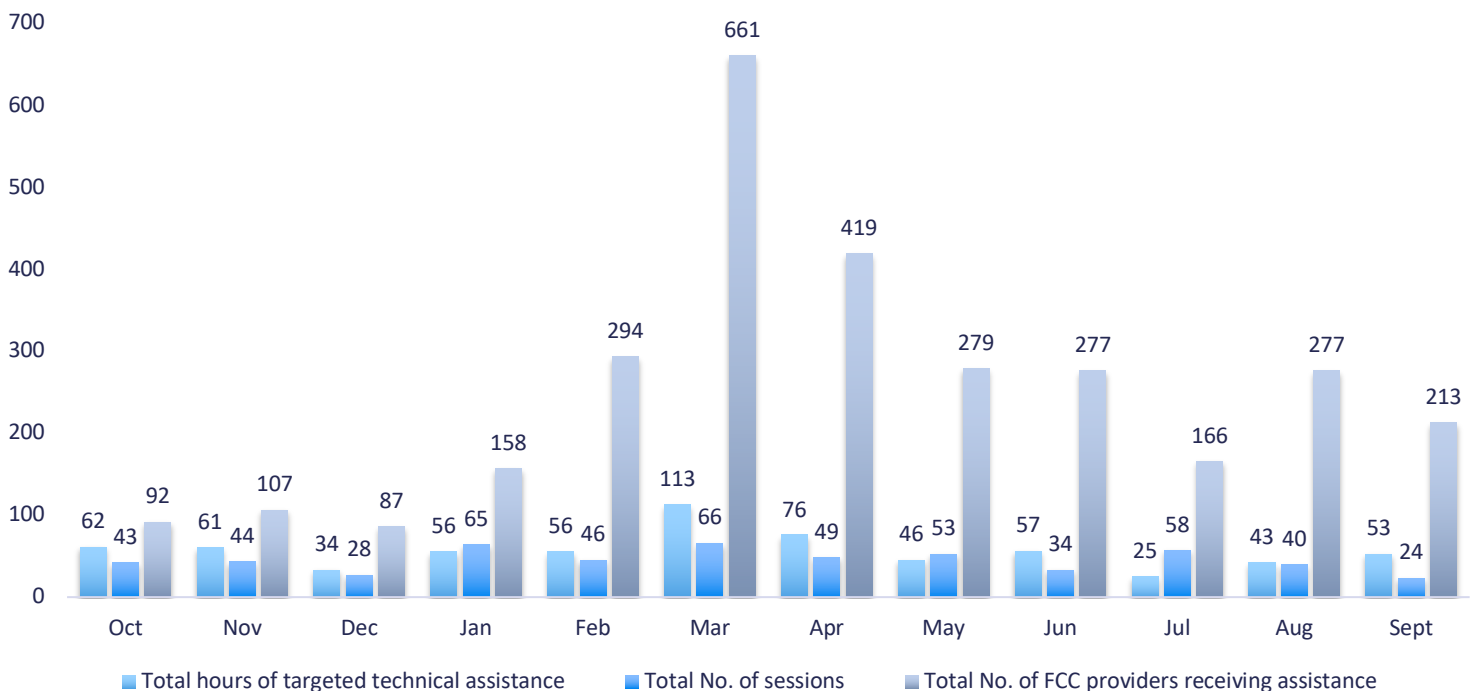
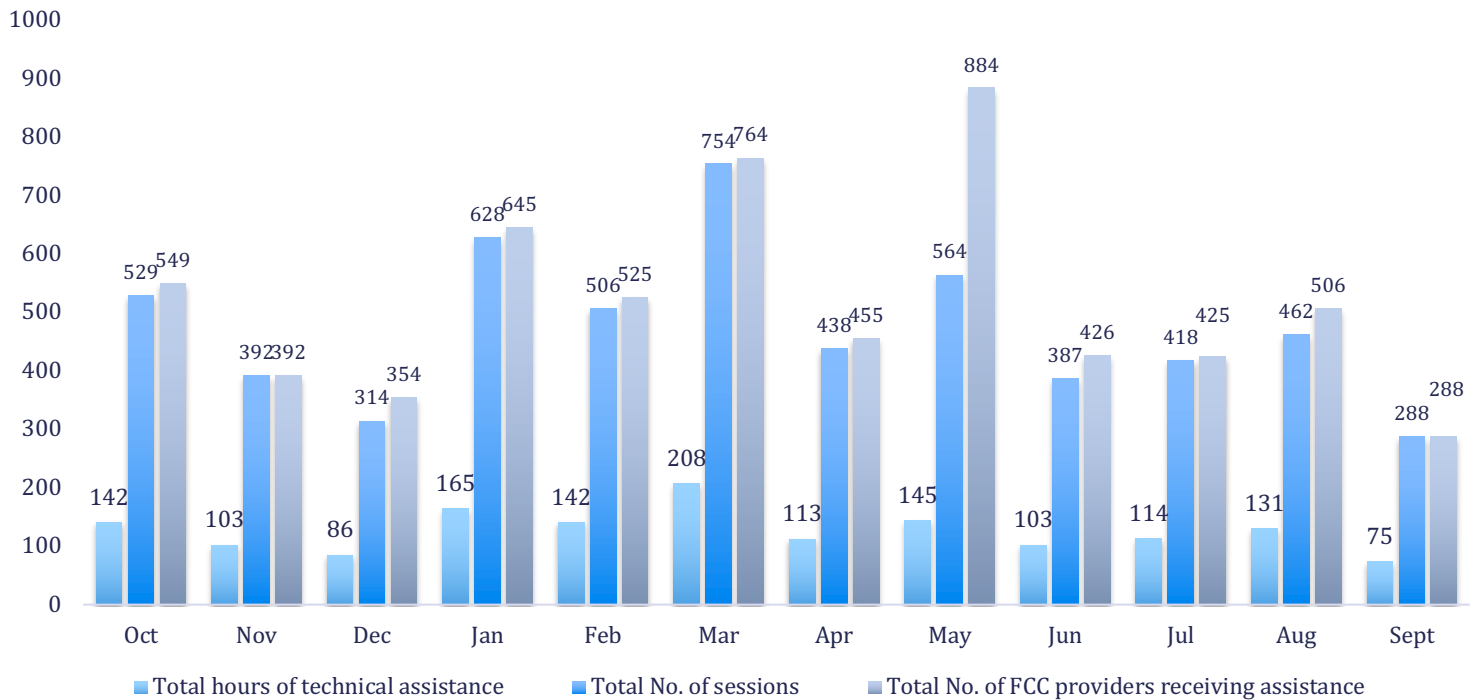
Advisors offered support and outreach to new providers and unregulated providers, including those in rural areas. TFCCN worked with providers to start the licensing process, beginning with attending the DHS Pre-licensure Orientation.

Total New FCC Provider Touches	386
Unregulated FCC Provider Touches	472
Rural FCC Provider Touches	2464
Total Providers Referred to Pre-licensure Orientation	109

Tennessee Family Child Care Network (TFCCN), continued

TFCCN Technical Assistance and Targeted Technical Assistance FY October 2022 – September 2023

Technical Assistance is customized support to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services. Targeted Technical Assistance is technical assistance in response to referrals from the State or requests by a child care agency with specific, targeted areas for improvement.





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