

POVERTY AND WELFARE RIGHTS

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

ACLU does not represent individuals who are applying for, or appealing a denial of, government benefits (Temporary Assistance to Needy Children/TANF, General Assistance/GA, Food Stamps, Medicare, TennCare, Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income/SSI). Individuals with these concerns should contact Legal Services or county welfare agencies.

WELFARE

Financial need is the basic requirement for receiving welfare. Four categories of people are generally able to receive benefits: the aged, the blind, the permanently or totally disabled, and people with dependent children. Any person can apply for welfare. While one may not necessarily be entitled to receive it, no one can be denied the opportunity to fill out the application. A person who is denied welfare is entitled to be told why the application was denied, told what the applicable law is, and be given the right to appeal if benefits are denied. 45 CFR sec. 206.10(a)(4). The federal government makes money available to states to finance these benefits. In Tennessee, welfare for families with dependent children is called "Families First" and currently operates in compliance with Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Some states may also provide additional benefits, called "general assistance," which is welfare aid provided by state and local governments to those who do not qualify for federal assistance. Tennessee does not have general assistance programs in effect at this time. New federal law requirements, and to a lesser extent state law, restrict aid to immigrants and the unemployed.

Where to Apply: There is a welfare office in every county, and applicants must apply at their local office. Applicants must apply in person, but can bring someone along if they need help filling out or reading the application.

How long does it take? The welfare department will make its determination and notify recipients of a decision by mail within 45 days of submitting an application.

How much do I get? Benefits are computed to cover a family's basic needs like food and clothing, and are computed based on the number of people in the family and the category of aid they eligible for.

TENNCARE

TennCare is a government-operated medical assistance program designed for people who are eligible for Medicaid, as well as for some children who do not have insurance. TennCare is a Medicaid waiver, or demonstration program. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the use of managed-care principles can generate sufficient savings to enable the state to cover more than Medicaid eligible people.

PATIENTS' RIGHTS

A common type of discrimination against low income people in hospital emergency rooms is to transfer people to a public hospital even though the first hospital could treat them. This is called "dumping" and national hospital standards provide that no hospital should arbitrarily transfer someone if the hospital to which he was initially brought has means to adequately care for the patient.

You can obtain the American Hospital Association's "Patients' Bill of Rights" by writing to 840 North Lakeshore Drive, Chicago IL 60611. The Tennessee Hospital Association, in Nashville, provides information by phone at (615) 242-4803.

DUE PROCESS

Welfare and Medicaid recipients are entitled to a fair hearing any time that:

- A request for aid is denied;
- A request for aid is not acted upon within 45 days;
- A request for aid is only partly granted;
- Aid being received is reduced, suspended or terminated; or
- Aid is paid in the form of vendor or third-party payments.

FREE SCHOOL LUNCHES

The National School Lunch Act provides that "every child from a family whose income falls below the poverty line will receive a free or reduced price lunch." The law provides federal funds to school districts for free and below-cost school lunches. If a school gets money under



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Tel: 615.320.7142

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this program, the school board **must** provide school lunches for *all* eligible children in the district (not just the younger ones). Despite this law, many schools do not have school lunch programs. If a school has no kitchen, the school board must make other arrangements to ensure that all students receive a nutritious lunch.

RESOURCES – NATIONAL AND STATE

ACLU-TN provides the following list of resources for informational purposes only. ACLU-TN does not endorse any of the organizations listed.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- [National Housing Law Project](#)

614 Grand Ave., Suite 320
Oakland, CA 94610
(510) 251-9400

Washington D.C. office:
727 15th St, NW, 6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 347-8775 (202) 347-8776 (FAX)
Advocate and resource for attorneys and legal service clinics who seek safe and affordable housing for their clients.

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

- [Catholic Charities, Inc.](#)

1325 Jefferson
Memphis, TN 38104
(901)722-4700

- [CAMPUS for Human Development](#)

532 8th Avenue South
P.O. Box 25309
Nashville, TN 37202-5309
Phone: (615) 251-9791
Fax: (609) 251-3274

Faith Based non profit organization that provides emergency and long-term shelters for the homeless and families in need. Also provides educational programs, respite care, alcohol and drug treatment case management, day services, and guest houses. Helps homeless become self-sufficient through this variety of programs.

- [Memphis Union Mission](#)

383 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, TN 38103
(901)526-8403

Provides emergency housing for intact families in the Memphis area.

- [Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development](#)

312 Rosa L. Parks Blvd, Eleventh Floor
Nashville, TN 37243
(615) 741-1888

- [Tennessee Department of Human Services](#)

400 Deaderick Street, 2nd Floor
Nashville, TN 37243-1403
(615)313-4700

The Department of Human Services serves to improve the well-being of economically disadvantaged, disabled, or vulnerable Tennesseans through a network of financial, employment, rehabilitative and protective services.

- **The Department of Human Services has the following hotlines:**

* Adult Daycare: 1-800-842-8261

*Adult Protective Services: 1-888-APS-TENN

*Child and Adult Care Food Program: (615)313-4749

* Child Care Licensing: 615-313-4778

*Child Care Complaints: 1-800-462-8261

*Families First (TANF): 1-866-311-4287

*Family Assistant Service Centers: 1-866-311-4287

*Food Stamp Program: 1-866-311-4287

*Home Energy Assistant: 615-313-4766

*Home Maker Program: 615-313-4768

*Medicaid/TennCare:

-Qualified Medicare Beneficiary: 1-800-624-5547

-TennCare Member Services: 1-800-523-2863

-Medicare: 1-800-772-1213

*Refugee Services: 615-259-3567

*Weatherization: 615-313-4766



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▪ **Tennessee Fair Housing Council**

131 Main Street,
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(201) 489-3552

The Fair Housing Council's mission is ending discrimination in housing in Middle Tennessee by providing comprehensive legal representation; education and outreach; and enforcement of fair housing practices.

▪ **Tennessee Housing Development Agency –
Emergency Shelter Grant**

404 James Robertson Parkway,
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 643-5727

The Newark Emergency Family Services provides financial assistance to families in need. They also provide rent, utilities, food, clothes, prescriptions, and shelter referral assistance.

▪ **Tennessee Justice Center**

301 Charlotte Ave
Nashville, TN 37201
615-255-0331
877-255-0354
Fax: 615-255-0354
info@tnjustice.org

TJC seeks justice for the poor through the courts, in administrative proceedings and before legislative bodies. Often represent people who have been denied TennCare.

▪ **Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee**

922 Delaware Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37921
Phone: 865-521-0000
Fax: 865-521-0040

▪ **Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee**

331 Great Circle Road,
Nashville, TN 37228
(615) 329-3988

▪ **Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee**

127 Dillon Court
Gray, TN 37615
(423)477-4053

▪ **South Central Human Resource**

(931) 433-7182

Provides various programs to help poor and homeless persons and families in the following counties: Lawrence, Hickman, Coffee, Lewis, Giles, Marshall, Moore, Franklin, Lincoln, Perry, Wayne, Maury, and Bedford.

▪ **Southwest Human Resource Agency**

Chester County: (731) 989-3879
Decatur County: (731) 852-4151
Hardeman County: (731) 658-9292
Hardin County: (731) 925-5405
Haywood County: (731) 772-2644
Henderson County: (731) 968-6802
McNairy County: (731) 645-5739
Madison County: (731) 423-8768

The Southwest Human Resource Agency offers programs for low-income individuals , underemployed individuals, senior citizens, and the disabled.

EAST TENNESSEE LEGAL RESOURCES

▪ **East Tennessee Legal Aid**

Northern Region – Johnson City

311 West Walnut Street
Johnson City, TN 37604
(423)928-8311
(800)821-1312
Fax: (423)928-9488
www.laet.org

▪ **East Tennessee Legal Aid
Northern Region – Morristown**

1001 W. 2nd North Street
Morristown, TN 37814
(423) 587-4850
(800) 821-1309
Fax (423) 587-4857

▪ **East Tennessee Legal Aid
Central Region – Knoxville**

502 S. Gay St. Suite 404
Knoxville, TN 37902
(865) 637-0484
Fax (865) 525-1162



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Tel: 615.320.7142

- **East Tennessee Legal Aid
Central Region – Maryville**
*Compton Place
307 Ellis Ave
Maryville, TN 37801
(865) 981-1818
Fax (865) 981-1816*
- **East Tennessee Legal Aid
Southern Region – Chattanooga**
*744 McCallie Ave, Suite 410
Chattanooga, TN 37403
(423) 756-4013
(800) 572-7457
Fax (423) 265-4164*
- **East Tennessee Legal Aid
Southern Region – Cleveland**
*85 Central Ave NW
Cleveland, TN 37311
(423) 479-8577
(800) 445-3219
Fax (423) 339-3282*
Legal Services offices throughout the state offer legal services in civil cases to the poor. The principal areas that it offers help with are entitlements, compensation, education, housing and unemployment.
- **Legal Aid Society
Giles, Hickman, Maury, Marshall, Lawrence,
Lewis, Perry, and Wayne Counties**
*104 W. 7th Street
P.O. Box 1256
Columbia, TN 38402-1256
(931)381-5533
www.las.org*
- **Legal Aid Society
Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson,
Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Van Buren, White**
*9 South Jefferson Avenue
Suite 102
Cookeville, TN 38501
(931) 528-7436
(800)262-6817
www.las.org*
- **Legal Aid Society
Sumner, Macon, Smith, Trousdale, and Wilson
Counties**
*650 North Water Avenue
Gallatin, TN 37066
(615)451-1880
www.las.org*
- **Legal Aid Society
Rutherford and Cannon Counties**
*526 North Walnut Street
Murfreesboro, TN 37130
(615)890-0905
www.las.org*
- **Legal Aid Society
Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Morgan,
Roane, Scott, and Union Counties**
*Oak Ridge Office
P.O. Box 5209
Oak Ridge, TN 37381
(865)483-8454
(800)483-8457
www.las.org*
- **Legal Aid Society
Bedford, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy, Lincoln,
Moore, and Warren Counties**
*123 NW Atlantic Street
P.O. Box 1293
Tullahoma, TN 37388
(931)455-7000
(866)898-0171
Fax: (931)455-7003*

MIDDLE TENNESSEE LEGAL RESOURCES

- **Legal Aid Society
Davidson and Williamson Counties**
*300 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37201
1-800-283-1443
www.las.org*
- **Legal Aid Society
Montgomery, Robertson, Dickson, Cheatham,
Stewart, Houston, and Humphreys Counties**
*120 Franklin Street
Clarksville, TN 37040
(931)552-6656
(800)342-3317
www.las.org*



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WEST TENNESSEE LEGAL RESOURCES

- **West Tennessee Legal Services
Madison, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman,
Haywood, and Henderson Counties**
Physical Address:
210 W. Main Street
Jackson, TN 38301
(731)423-0616
Fax: (731)423-2600

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 2066
Jackson, TN 38302-2066
Wtls@wtls.org
www.wtls.org
- **West Tennessee Legal Services
Crocket, Dyer, Lake, and Obion Counties**
Physical Address:
208 East Church Street
Dyersburg, TN 38024
(731)285-8181
Fax: (731)285-8184

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 366
Dyersburg, TN 38024
www.wtls.org
- **West Tennessee Legal Services
Benton, Carroll, Henry, and Weakley Counties**
Physical Address:
113 West Paris Street
Huntingdon, TN 38344
(731) 986-8975
Fax: (731)986-8977

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 857
Huntingdon, TN 37344
www.wtls.org

- **West Tennessee Legal Services
Chester, McNairy, and Hardin Counties**
Physical Address:
141 West Third Street
Selmer, TN 38375
(731)645-7691
(800)499-1602
Fax: (731)645-3557

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 189
Selmer, TN 38375\
www.wtls.org

- **Memphis Area Legal Services
Shelby County**
109 N. Main Street, Suite 200
Claridge House Building
Memphis, TN 38103
(901)523-8822
www.malsi.org
- **Memphis Area Legal Services
Fayette, Lauderdale, and Tipton Counties**
899-A Hwy 51 South
Covington, TN 38019
(901) 476-1808
(888)207-6386
www.malsi.org

TENNESSEE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS

**Anderson County
Community Action Commission**
135 East Broad Street
Clinton, TN 37716
(865) 457-5500
(865) 457-5502 fax
serving Anderson County

**Blount County
Community Action Agency**
3509 Tuckaleechee Pike
Maryville, TN 37803
(865) 983-8411
(865) 681-1781 fax
serving Blount County



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**Bradley-Cleveland
Community Services Agency**

155 Sixth Street SE
Cleveland, TN 37320
(423) 479-4111
(423) 479-4113 fax
serving Bradley County

**Chattanooga
Human Services**

501 West 12th Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402
(423) 757-5551
(423) 757-5294 fax
serving Hamilton County

**Clarksville-Montgomery County
Community Action Agency**

350 Pageant Lane, Suite 307
Clarksville, TN 37041
(931) 648-5774
(931) 648-5784
serving Montgomery County

**Delta
Human Resources Agency**

915 Hwy 51 S
Covington, TN 38019
(901) 476-5226
(901) 476-5258 fax
serving Fayette, Lauderdale & Tipton Counties

**Douglas-Cherokee
Economic Authority**

534 E First N Street
Morristown, TN 37816
(423) 587-4500
(423) 587-4509 fax
serving Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Monroe &
Sevier Counties

**Highland Rim
Economic Corporation**

213 College Street
Erin, TN 37061
(931) 289-4101
(931) 289-5311 fax
serving Dickson, Houston, Humphreys & Stewart Counties

**Knoxville-Knox County
Community Action Committee**

2247 Western Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37950
(865) 546-3500
(865) 546-0832 fax
serving Knox County

**Metropolitan
Action Commission**

1624 5th Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37208
(615) 862-8860
(615) 862-8881 fax
serving Davidson County

**Mid-Cumberland
Community Action Agency**

233 Legends Drive, Suite 103
Lebanon, TN 37088
(615) 742-1113 or 1137
(615) 742-3911 fax
serving Cheatham, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner,
Trousdale, Williamson & Wilson Counties

**Mid-East
Community Action Agency**

P. O. Box 43
141 Oddfellows Cemetery Road
Rockwood, TN 37854
(865) 354-0450 or (865) 986-7162
(865) 354-0771 fax
serving Loudon & Roane Counties

**Mountain Valley
Economic Opportunity/ETHRA**

9111 Cross Park Drive, Suite D-100
Knoxville, TN 37923
(865) 691-2551
(865) 531-7216 fax
serving Campbell, Claiborne, Morgan, Scott & Union
Counties

**Northwest Tennessee
Economic Development Council**

231 South Wilson Street
Dresden, TN 38225
(731) 364-3228
(731) 364-5163 fax
serving Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry,
Lake, Obion & Weakley Counties



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Shelby County

Community Services Agency

100 North Main Street, Suite 1300
Memphis, TN 38103
(901) 545-4630
(901) 545-3592 fax
serving Shelby County

South Central

Human Resource Agency

1437 Winchester Highway
Fayetteville, TN 37334
(931) 433-7182
(931) 438-0074 fax
serving Bedford, Coffee, Franklin, Giles, Hickman,
Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Moore, Perry
& Wayne Counties

South East Tennessee

Human Resource Agency

312 Resource Road
Dunlap, TN 37327
(423) 949-2191
(423) 949-4023 fax
serving Bledsoe, Grundy, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Polk,
Rhea & Sequatchie Counties

Southwest

Human Resource Agency

1527 White Avenue/Hwy 45 N
Henderson, TN 38340
(731) 989-5111
(731) 989-3095 fax
serving Chester, Decatur, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood,
Henderson, Madison & McNairy Counties

Upper Cumberland

Human Resource Agency

3313 Williams Enterprise Drive
Cookeville, TN 38506
(931) 528-1127
(931) 526-8305 fax
serving Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress,
Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van
Buren, Warren & White Counties

Upper East Tennessee

Human Development Agency

301 Louis Street
Kingsport, TN 37662
(423) 246-6180
(423) 246-5682 fax
serving Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson,
Sullivan, Unicoi & Washington Counties
It is the mission of these community resource agencies to
promote self-sufficiency in families and communities
through the provision of training, technical assistance, and
advocacy.



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