

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 (or 90 days for some Medicaid applicants) 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 are 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 "The Patient Care Partnership: Understanding Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities" by visiting <http://www.aha.org/advocacy-issues/communicatingpts/pt-care-partnership.shtml> or by writing to AHA Services Inc., P.O. Box 933283, Atlanta, GA 31193-3283. The Tennessee Hospital Association, in Nashville, provides information by phone at 615-256-8240.

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



P.O. Box 120160, Nashville, TN 37212

Tel: 615.320.7142

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 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](#)
703 Market Street, Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94103
Website: <http://www.nhlp.org/>
Phone: 415-546-7000
Fax: 415-546-7007

The National Housing Law Project (NHLP) is a nonprofit national housing and legal advocacy center established in 1968. Their mission is to advance housing justice for poor people.

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

- [Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc.](#)
2806 McGavock Pike
Nashville, TN 37214
Website: <http://www.cctenn.org/>
Phone: 615-352-3087
Fax: 615-352-8591

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Nashville advocates for and provides services which enhance and enrich the quality of life for people in need.

- [Room In the Inn](#)
705 Drexel Street
Nashville, TN 37203
Website: <http://www.roomintheinn.org/>
Phone: 615-251-9791
Fax: 615-251-3274
E-mail: info@roomintheinn.org

Room in the Inn provides programs that emphasize human development and recovery through education, self-help and work, centered in community and long-term support for those who call the streets of Nashville home.

- [Chattanooga Area Food Bank](#)
2009 Curtain Pole Road
Chattanooga, TN 37406
Website: <http://www.chattfoodbank.org/>
Phone: 423- 622-1800
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): 706-330-4562

Through a network of more than 300 partners and donations of money, time and resources, the goal of the Chattanooga Area Food Bank is to support those in need until hunger is eliminated.

- [Memphis Union Mission](#)
P.O. Box 330
Memphis, TN 38101
Website: <http://www.memphisunionmission.org/>
Main Office Phone: 901-526-8403
Shelter Phone: 901-526-8434
Fax: 901-526-5430

The Memphis Union Mission ministers to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of men, women and families who are homeless, addicted and in crisis.

- [Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development](#)
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243
Website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/ecd/>
Phone: 615-741-1888
E-mail: ECD.Communications.Office@tn.gov

The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development seeks to attract new corporate investment in Tennessee and works with Tennessee companies to facilitate expansion and economic growth.



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Tel: 615.320.7142

▪ **Tennessee Department of Human Services**

400 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-1403

Website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/humanservices>

Phone: 615-313-4700

E-mail: Human-Services. Webmaster@tn.gov

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.

▪ **Department of Human Services Hotlines:**

- Abuse or neglect: 1-888-APS-TENN (1-888-277-8366)
- Adult Day Care: 1-800-462-8261
- Adult Protective Services (APS): 1-888-APS-TENN (1-888-277-8366)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program: 615-313-4749
- Child Care Complaints: 1-800-462-8261
- Family Assistant Service Centers: 1-866-311-4287
- Fraud: 1-800-241-2629
- Paternity Acknowledgement Program: 1-800-457-2165

▪ **Tennessee Fair Housing Council**

107 Music City Circle, Suite 318
Nashville, TN 37214

Website: <http://www.tennfairhousing.org/>

Phone: 615-874-2344

Fax: 615-874-1636

The Fair Housing Council's mission is the elimination of housing discrimination in Tennessee.

▪ **Tennessee Housing Development Agency**

Andrew Jackson Building, Third Floor
502 Deaderick Street, Nashville, TN 37243

Website: <http://thda.org/>

Phone: 615-815-2200

Toll Free: 800-228-THDA (8432)

The Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) promotes the production of more affordable new housing units for very low, low and moderate income individuals and families in the state, to promote the preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing units for such persons, and to bring greater stability to the residential construction industry and related industries so as to assure a steady flow of production of new housing units.

▪ **Tennessee Justice Center**

301 Charlotte Ave
Nashville, TN 37201

Website: <https://www.tnjustice.org/>

Phone: 615-255-0331

Toll Free: 1-877-608-1009

Fax: 615-255-0354

The Tennessee Justice Center is a non-profit law firm that serves vulnerable families by advocating for the voiceless, holding government accountable and improving health and financial security for families.

▪ **Second Harvest Food Bank**

The Second harvest Food Bank works to feed hungry people and to solve hunger issues in Tennessee.

Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee

136 Harvest Lane

Maryville, TN 37801

Website: <https://secondharvestetn.org/>

Phone: 865-521-0000

Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee

331 Great Circle Road

Nashville, TN 37228

Website: <http://secondharvestmidtn.org/>

Phone: 615-329-3491



P.O. Box 120160, Nashville, TN 37212

Tel: 615.320.7142

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee

1020 Jericho Drive
Kingsport, TN 37663

Website: <http://www.netfoodbank.org/>

Phone: 423-279-0430

Fax: 423- 279-0590

▪ **South Central Human Resource Agency**

1437 Winchester Highway
Fayetteville, TN 37334

Phone: 931-433-7182

Fax: 931-438-0074

Website: <http://www.schra.us/>

The mission of South Central Human Resource Agency (SCHRA) is to assist eligible people of all ages obtain a variety of services and resources. SCHRA helps provide support and early childhood care through Head Start and Early Head Start and elderly assistance through Senior Services America, Foster Grandparents, Homemaker Services and Meals-On-Wheels. Community corrections, weatherization and energy assistance, nutritional services, protective and other social services are also available to families and individuals throughout the SCHRA service area.

Legal Aid of East Tennessee

Website: <http://www.laet.org/>

Chattanooga Office

535 Chestnut Street, Suite 360
Chattanooga, TN 37402

Phone: 423-756-4013

Fax: 423-265-4164

Cleveland Office

166 North Ocoee Street
Cleveland, TN 37311

Phone: 423-303-2266

Erlanger Health System eHLP

Only for Erlanger Hospital patients

975 East Third Street
Chattanooga, TN 37403

Phone: 423-778-7807

Family Justice Center

400 Harriet Tubman Street
Knoxville, TN 37915

Phone: 865-215-6830

Johnson City Office

311 W. Walnut Street, Suite 100
Johnson City, TN 37604

Phone: 423-928-8311

Fax: 423-928-9488

Knoxville Office

502 South Gay Street, Suite 404
Knoxville, TN 37902

Phone: 865-637-0484

Fax: 865-525-1162

Maryville Office

307 Ellis Avenue
Maryville, TN 37801

Phone: 865-981-1818

Fax: 865-981-1816

Morristown Office

1001 W. 2nd North Street
Morristown, TN 37814

Phone: 423-587-4850 or (800) 821-1309

Fax: 423-587-4857

Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland

Website: <http://www.las.org/>

Phone: 800-238-1443

Clarksville Office

Serves Montgomery, Robertson, Dickson, Cheatham, Stewart, Houston, and Humphreys counties

109 South Third Street
Clarksville, TN 37040

Phone: 731-552-6656 or 800-342-3317

Columbia Office

Serves Giles, Hickman, Maury, Marshall, Lawrence, Lewis, Perry, and Wayne counties

1121 Trotwood Avenue, Suite 4 (Zip Code 38401)

P.O. Box 1256

Columbia, TN 38402-1256

Phone: 731-381-5533



P.O. Box 120160, Nashville, TN 37212

Tel: 615.320.7142

Cookeville Office
Serves Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress,
Jackson, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Van
Buren, and White counties
9 South Jefferson Avenue, Suite 102
Cookeville, TN 38501
Phone: 731-528-7436

Gallatin Office
Serves Macon, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale,
and Wilson counties
650 North Water Avenue
Gallatin, TN 37066
Phone: 615-451-1880 or 888-475-4150

Murfreesboro Office
Serves Cannon and Rutherford counties
526 North Walnut Street
Murfreesboro, TN 37130
Phone: 615-890-0905

Nashville Office
Serves Davidson and Williamson counties
300 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37201
Phone: 615-244-6610 or 800-238-1443

Oak Ridge Office
Serves Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne,
Morgan, Roane, Scott, and Union counties
226B Broadway, Jackson Square
P.O. Box 5209
Oak Ridge, TN 37831
Phone: 865-483-8454 or 800-483-8457

Tullahoma Office
Serves Bedford, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy,
Lincoln, Moore, and Warren counties
123 NW Atlantic Street
Tullahoma, TN 37388
Phone: 731-455-7000 or 866-898-0171

Memphis Area Legal Services
Website: <http://www.malsi.org/>

Memphis Service Office
22 North Front Street, 11th Floor
Memphis, TN 38103
Phone: 901-523-8822

Toll Free: 866-361-9001
Fax: 901-543-5087
Rural Service Office
899-A Highway 51 South
Covington, TN 38019
Phone: 901-523-8822
Toll Free: 888-207-6386
Fax: 901-475-6330

West Tennessee Legal Services
Website: <http://www.wtls.org/>
Jackson Office (Main Office)
Serves Madison, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman,
Haywood, and Henderson counties
210 W. Main Street (Zip Code 38301)
P.O. Box 2066
Jackson, TN 38302-2066
Phone: 731-423-0616
Fax: 731-423-2600

Dyersburg Office
Serves Crockett, Dyer, Lake, and Obion
counties
208 East Church Street
P.O. Box 366
Dyersburg, TN 38024
Phone: 731-285-8181
Fax: 731-285-8184

Huntingdon Office
Serves Benton, Carroll, Henry, and Weakley
counties
113 West Paris Street
P.O. Box 857Huntingdon, TN 38344
Phone: 731-986-8975
Fax: 731-986-8977

Selmer Office
Serves Chester, McNairy, and Hardin
counties
141 West Third Street
P.O. Box 189
Selmer, TN 38375
Phone: 731-645-796
Fax: 731-645-3557



P.O. Box 120160, Nashville, TN 37212
Tel: 615.320.7142

TENNESSEE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS

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.

**Anderson County
Community Action Commission**
149 North Main Street
Clinton, TN 37716
Phone: 865-457-5500
Serving Anderson County

**Blount County
Community Action Agency**
3509 Tuckaleechee Pike
Maryville, TN 37803
Website: <http://www.blountcaa.org/>
Phone: 865-983-8411
Serving Blount County

**Bradley-Cleveland
Community Services Agency**
155 Sixth Street SE
Cleveland, TN 37311
Phone: 423- 479-4111
Serving Bradley County

**City of Chattanooga Department of Youth and
Family Development**
501 West 12th Street
Chattanooga, TN 37
Website: [http://www.chattanooga.gov/
youthandfamily](http://www.chattanooga.gov/youthandfamily)
Phone: 423-643-6400
Serving Hamilton County

**Clarksville-Montgomery County
Community Action Agency**
150 Lafayette Road
Clarksville, TN 37042
Website: <http://www.cmccaa.com/>
Phone: 931-896-1800
Serving Montgomery County

Delta Human Resources Agency
P.O. Box 634
915 Hwy 51 S
Covington, TN 38019
Website: <http://www.deltahra.org/>
(901) 476-5226
(901) 476-5258 fax
serving Fayette, Lauderdale & Tipton Counties

Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority
534 E First N Street
Morristown, TN 37816
Website: <http://www.douglascherokee.org/>
Phone: 423- 587-4500
Serving Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson,
Monroe & Sevier Counties

**East Tennessee Human Resource
Agency/Mountain Valley**
9111 Cross Park Drive #D-100
Knoxville, TN 37923
Website: <http://www.ethra.org/>
Phone: 865-691-2551
Serving Campbell, Claiborne, Morgan, Scott, &
Union Counties

Highland Rim Economic Corporation
213 College Street
Erin, TN 37061
Phone: 931-289-4101
Serving Dickson, Houston, Humphreys & Stewart
Counties

**Knoxville-Knox County Community Action
Committee**
2247 Western Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37921
Website: www.knoxcac.org
Phone: 865-546-3500
Serving Knox County

Metropolitan Action Commission
802 2nd Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37219
Website: [http://www.nashville.gov/Metro-Action-
Commission.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Metro-Action-Commission.aspx)
Phone: 615-862-8860
Serving Davidson County



P.O. Box 120160, Nashville, TN 37212
Tel: 615.320.7142

Mid-Cumberland Community Action Agency

233 Legends Drive, Suite 103
Lebanon, TN 37087
Website: <http://midcumberland.org/>
Phone: 615-742-1113
Serving Cheatham, Robertson, Rutherford,
Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson & Wilson
Counties

Mid-East Community Action Agency

315 East Race Street
Kingston, TN 37763
Website: <http://www.mecaa.net/>
Phone: 865-248-8661
Serving Loudon & Roane Counties

Northwest Tennessee

Economic Development Council

231 South Wilson Street
Dresden, TN 38225
Website: <http://nwcommunityaction.org/>
Phone: 731- 364-3228
Serving Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson,
Henry, Lake, Obion & Weakley Counties

Shelby County

Community Services Agency

2670 Union Extended, Suite 500
Memphis, TN 38112
Website: <http://www.shelbycountyttn.gov/>
Phone: 901-222-4200
Serving Shelby County

South Central Human Resource Agency

1437 Winchester Highway
Fayetteville, TN 37334
Website: <http://www.schra.us/>
Phone: 931-433-7182
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
Phone: 423- 949-2191
Website: <http://sethra.us/>
Serving Bledsoe, Grundy, Marion, McMinn,
Meigs, Polk, Rhea & Sequatchie Counties

Southwest Human Resource Agency

1527 White Avenue
Henderson, TN 38340
Website: <http://www.swhra.org/>
Phone: 731- 989-5111
Serving Chester, Decatur, Hardeman, Hardin,
Haywood, Henderson, Madison & McNairy
Counties

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency

500 South Jefferson Street, #8
Cookeville, TN 38501
Website: <http://uchra.com/>
Phone: 931-528-1127
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
Website: <http://uethda.org/>
Phone: 423-230-3705
Serving Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins,
Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi & Washington Counties



P.O. Box 120160, Nashville, TN 37212

Tel: 615.320.7142

This information provided is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be legal advice.

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