

[0](#)

Receive Updates



# MSS September 2016 Newsletter - Transforming Communities, Sandwich Generation, Low Wages, Incarcerated Parents and More

Nashville.gov sent this bulletin at 09/08/2016 10:40 AM CDT

If you're having trouble viewing this email, you may [see it online](#).

 SHARE



## Metropolitan Social Services

Planning, Coordination and Social Data Analysis

Newsletter - September 2016



**A Shared Sentence  
Invisible Victims**

**Children with Incarcerated Parents**

[A Shared Sentence](#), an April 2016 policy report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, discusses “the devastating toll of parental incarceration on kids, families and communities.”

When parents spend time incarcerated, even for a few days in jail as well as years in a prison, it affects children in many ways, even if the parent does not share the same home. Children may be affected by loss of family income or child support, or have to move because the families can no longer afford the rent or mortgage, or when there are whispers at school, church or in their neighborhood about where their mother or father went.

In the U.S., about 7% of all children have experienced parental incarceration, compared to 10% in Tennessee (only 8 states had 10% or higher). This equates to 144,000 children in Tennessee with parents who are or have been incarcerated.

Families are building blocks of communities, states and the nation, but are broken down by the unstable environment caused by incarceration. The effect may be magnified if children live in a community (usually a low-income community) which has many residents who are in or returning from incarceration. This type of traumatic event can create damage to children that can last for their lives, preventing them from achieving their full potential.

The mass incarceration in the U.S. is problematic and needs to change, as indicated in *A Shared Sentence*. Some states have created initiatives to use less costly alternatives to address nonviolent offenses. The disproportionate incarceration of Black or African American men has been acknowledged, and children of color are more likely to have a parent in prison.

*A Shared Sentence* provides recommendations on how to build a stronger support system for children: 1) Ensure children are supported while parents are incarcerated and after they return; 2) Connect parents who have returned to the community with pathways to employment; 3) Strengthen communities, particularly those disproportionately affected by incarceration and reentry, to promote family stability and opportunity.

**Financial Insecurity of  
Low-Wage Workers**

[Financial Insecurity of Low-Wage Workers](#), a new MSS issue paper, explains that the magnitude of jobs with low pay leaves many workers and their families struggling to make ends meet, despite the decrease in the unemployment rate falling to pre-recession levels. Because the unemployment rate includes only people who are actively looking for employment, it does not include many who have given up.

It notes that 42% of all U.S. workers make less than \$15 per hour, including many who make the minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. It describes how the shift to temporary staffing agencies have been detrimental to manufacturing workers (paying lower wages with no benefits).

When so many workers receive very low wages, it results in greater utilization of public benefits that are supported by taxpayers. *Financial Insecurity* provides data from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology showing how much it costs to live in Davidson County for different family sizes (\$42,780 for one parent and one child). It also shows the disparity in pay across gender, race/ethnicity and educational attainment.

**The Effect of Student  
Debt on Home Ownership**

The [Effect of Student Debt on Home Ownership](#), a new issue brief from Metro Social Services,



## The Sandwich Generation

### Caring for Children and Aging Parents

Persons in the Sandwich Generation are those who have a parent age 65 and over and financially dependent children. In recent years, the percent of middle-aged adults who fit this definition has increased only slightly, but the financial burden increased even more (more often from grown children than from elderly parents)

Generation X (persons typically born between the mid-1960 and the mid to late 1970's) are more likely to be sandwiched between caring for a financially dependent child while at the same time having primary care responsibilities for their parent(s). People in Generation X are increasingly faced with the challenge of caring for their own children as well as caregiving responsibilities for their aging parents.

A Pew Research Center report, [The Sandwich Generation - Rising Financial Burdens for Middle-Age Americans](#), indicates that 15% of adults in their 40's and 50's are caring for both their own children and providing financial support for an aging parent. The report shows that persons sandwiched between children of their own and an aging parent are having to provide physical, emotional and financial support while at the same time trying to manage and maintain their own households.

[Sandwich Generation Stress](#) from Empowering Parents describes caring for an elderly relative while raising children as “draining, stressful, emotional and guilt-inducing.” It notes that those in the sandwich generation devotes countless hours and billions of dollars to caring for both children and parents. It explains that demographic changes during the past 20 years have influenced how people respond to these needs, including more women in the workforce, increased life expectancy, having children later in life and a decreased number of children per family. It also discusses typical scenarios and identifies strategies for sandwich generation people to better address these circumstances.

### Reduction of public sector workforce during the Great Recession reduced black employment

describes the relationship between the rate of home ownership and debt acquired to attend college.

Between 2004 and 2014, the average amount of debt by graduation rose twice as fast as inflation. In Tennessee, 60% of graduates of 4-year institutions had debts, an average of \$25,510. The report also describes the difference in homeownership rates for those with college and no debt, college with student debt and no college.

### Share of union membership declining in the U.S.

The share of wage and salary workers in the United States who belong to unions continues to decrease. In 2015, about 11.1% were members of unions, according to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

According to the Bureau, the number of wage and salary workers belonging to unions, at 14.8 million in 2015, is significantly lower than in 1983, the first year for which comparable union data are available, when the union membership rate was 20.1 %, and there were 17.7 million union workers. However, according to the Congressional Research Service, union membership peaked in 1954 at 34.8% of all U.S. wage and salary workers.

According to the BLS report, public-sector workers had a

Due to the public sector's commitment to equal opportunity preventing employment discrimination, it has been well-documented that women and African Americans have been employed in the public sector at rates that are higher than their share of workers in the private sector.

[Blacks hit hardest by public-sector job losses during recession](#)

(University of Washington, August 2015) explained that black workers were hit the hardest by the public-sector job losses experienced during the Great Recession. They were more likely to become unemployed than their Hispanic and white coworkers. Part of the increased job losses for black workers was because they were employed in a greater proportion than other races were in government.

A decrease in tax revenues and anti-government sentiment reduced the level of government employment that has not recovered after the recession. It explained that job cuts were greater among black workers, even when factoring in education, job type, skills differences and other factors. According to some estimates, about one in five African American adults work for the government.

A decrease in tax revenues and anti-government sentiment reduced the level of government employment that has not recovered after the recession. It explained that job cuts were greater among black workers, even when factoring in education, job type, skills differences and other factors. According to some estimates, about one in five African American adults work for the government.

According to report by the Economic Policy Institute, [The public-sector job crisis](#), the public sector has generally provided African Americans higher wages, more stability and greater upward mobility than jobs held by black employees in the private sector. The report also explains that wage disparities between whites and other minorities are significantly smaller in state and local public sectors. This shows how employment in the public sector has historically provided greater opportunities and upward mobility.

One of the legacies of the Great Recession has been significant job losses in the public sector as federal, state, and local governments were net job losers, as described in [The Legacy of the Great Recession](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Legacy notes that post-recession job gains have been greater in the private sector than in government.



**Transforming Disadvantaged Communities**

union membership rate at 35.2%, more than five times higher than that of private-sector workers at 6.7%.



**Social Security Benefits Older Adults**

Low-income older adults rely heavily on Social Security benefits as their primary source of income. A report by the Economic Policy

Institute, [Financial Security of Elderly Americans at Risk](#)

includes these findings:

- Nearly half of older adults (48%) were economically vulnerable
- Women are more likely to be economically vulnerable than men
- Elderly Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be economically vulnerable than White

The report defines elderly people with incomes two times below the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) as economically vulnerable.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities indicates that Social Security keeps 22 million people out of poverty. A [state-by-state analysis](#) shows that In Tennessee, Social Security benefits kept 372,000 elderly poor adults out of poverty.

A Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [report](#) shows that in 2014, two out of every five older

**"Everybody should know about this."**

[Transforming Disadvantaged Communities – Using the Knowledge and Science of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma-Informed Care](#), an issue paper from MSS, focuses on how to improve neighborhoods with poverty, child abuse, high school dropouts, teen pregnancy, youth substance abuse, higher crime rates and other disadvantages. It is based on a recent 3-part series in the New York Times.

People in disadvantaged neighborhoods more often experience severe stress from their environment that can result in experiences like [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#) (PTSD, first identified in 1980). What happens to children ([Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)-ACEs on which the landmark research was done in 1997) creates toxic stress that results in an array of negative consequences. In terms of the study of medicine, both PTSD and ACEs are relatively new, with research findings boosted by new scanning diagnostics for brain imagery.

Both the Metropolitan Government (with [ACEs Nashville](#)) and the State of Tennessee (with [Tennessee's ACEs Initiative](#)) are working to create awareness about why Adverse Childhood Experiences so that policies and services can incorporate recent scientific findings to improve the lives of children and prevent many of the negative cycles that have repeated for generations.

With the growing scientific evidence of the persistent and significant damage caused by PTSD and ACEs (more often found in people who have other disadvantages), public policies and service providers can incorporate the principles of Trauma-Informed Care (that will be discussed further in the 2016 Community Needs Evaluation that will be released in Spring 2016).



**Food Insecurity  
Among Older Adults**

A new issue paper from MSS, [Food Insecurity Among Older Adults](#), discusses the growing trend of food insecurity and how it affects health outcomes and health care costs for older adults. It also describes the disparity, with food insecurity more likely for older persons who lived in southern states, who were minorities and had lower incomes.

This report explains that food insecure seniors were more likely to skip meals because of their budget, choose between purchasing medication (for the amount Medicare does not pay) and food, and pay for transportation instead of other expenses. The seniors who are food

adults would have incomes below the poverty level without Social Security. For African Americans and Latino's Social Security is an especially important part of their retirement income.

Social Security is the primary source of income for over 50% of older Americans. According to [AARP](#), 24% of persons age 65 and over rely on Social Security benefits for 90% of their monthly income while another 26% report half of their income comes from Social Security. The report also indicates that Social Security keeps older adults out of poverty and is a critical income source for African Americans and Hispanic households.



[@NashvilleMSS](#)



**[Like Metro Social Services on FACEBOOK](#)**

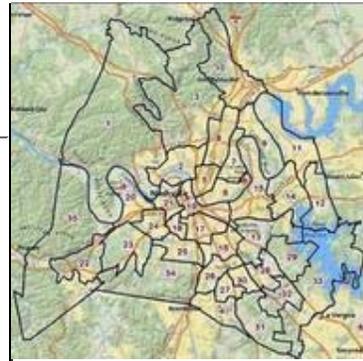
insecure are more likely to be in poor health. This is because lack of healthy food increases the likelihood of disabilities, infections and extended hospital stays.

## Metropolitan Social Services

800 2nd Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201

[Planning & Coordination](#) 615-862-6494

[Direct Services](#) 615-862-6458



***[Know Your Community](#)***, with Metro Council District data and maps, available online.

Update your subscriptions, modify your password or email address, or stop subscriptions at any time on your [Subscriber Preferences Page](#). You will need to use your email address to log in. If you have questions or problems with the subscription service, please contact [subscriberhelp.govdelivery.com](mailto:subscriberhelp.govdelivery.com).

This service is provided to you at no charge by [Nashville.gov](http://Nashville.gov).

Powered by **govDELIVERY** 