FY26 Impact Report

SWORPS

Annual Report 2026

Social Work Office of Research & Public Service

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A Message from the Associate Dean for Research



SWORPS brings the university's research and expertise into close partnership with the people and organizations serving Tennessee. This report offers a glimpse of what that collaboration made possible during FY26—from practical support for families to stronger tools and knowledge for the professionals who serve them.

I am proud of the SWORPS team and grateful to the partners who make this work possible. Their efforts reflect our College's commitment to research that informs practice and contributes to the well-being of our communities.

— Doug Coatsworth
Betsey R. Bush Endowed Professor & Associate Dean for Research

A Message from the Director



When I think about the impact of our work, I think first about the people our programs serve: parents working toward stability, relatives raising children, and providers caring for families in their communities. The support they receive matters in immediate, practical ways. Over time, though, I have come to see how much that support depends on the capacity of the organizations and systems around them.

A family needs opportunities and resources to thrive. Providers need the knowledge and tools to deliver quality services. Organizations need room to learn and improve, and communities need reliable information to make decisions. Strengthening those capacities has become central to how we understand our work at SWORPS.

Throughout FY26, we worked alongside partners across Tennessee through research, technology, direct service, and operational support. Some of that work took place with families and communities; some happened behind the scenes, in workforce systems, evaluations, and the day-to-day work of keeping projects running. Each contributed to our shared purpose of helping Tennessee's systems work better for the people they serve.

This report offers a selection of that work. I hope it gives you a sense of both what our staff accomplished and how they approached it—with strong relationships, careful attention to data, and a willingness to learn and make improvements. Those qualities are what allow a promising effort to become something lasting.

I am grateful to our staff and to the agencies, organizations, communities, and individuals who work with us. The accomplishments described here belong to that shared effort, and I look forward to what we will build together in the coming year.

— Daryl Chansuthus, Director, SWORPS

FY26 At a Glance

$50 Million

Proposal activity supported through SWORPS administrative infrastructure

2,045

Parents served through the Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program

82%

TCSEPP participants employed at some point during FY26

67

Tennessee counties served through TCSEPP

87,061

Professionals supported through Tennessee's early childhood workforce registry

14,000+

Child Care Help Desk contacts during FY26

23

Research and evaluation partners supported through DARE

4,419

Individuals served through HMIS-supported projects

449

Individuals who exited to permanent housing

244

Children supported through the Northeast Relative Caregiver Program

100%

Placement stability rate for children served through the Relative Caregiver Program

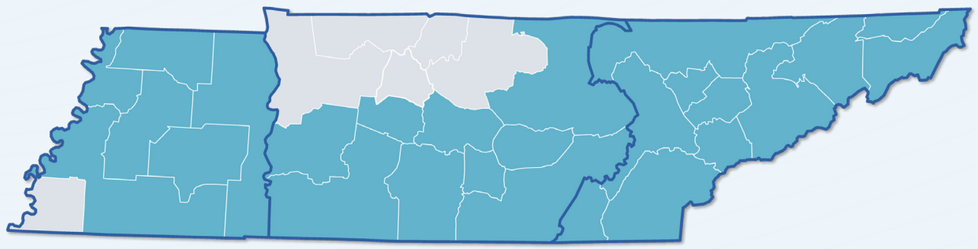
26

Proposal submissions supported by Budget, Finance & Operations

Strengthening Families & Communities

For a parent trying to find or keep a job, child care and transportation can be as consequential as employment skills. Housing stability affects children's well-being, while family relationships influence how people manage all of these demands. SWORPS programs worked alongside families throughout FY26 with those connections in mind, helping them address practical needs and strengthen the relationships that support them.

Helping Parents Build Stronger Futures



The **Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program (TCSEPP)** served 2,045 parents across 67 Tennessee counties during FY26. Of those participants, 82 percent were employed at some point during the year. The program's work supports parents as they pursue employment and build their ability to provide for their children.

2,045 Parents

67 Counties



A new Fatherhood Initiative added opportunities for fathers to strengthen their relationships with their children, improve co-parenting communication, and consider how they want to show up as parents. TCSEPP also continued developing its Continuous Quality Improvement processes and shared its work through conference presentations and statewide and national partnerships.

Support for Relative Caregivers

The **Northeast Relative Caregiver Program** helped relatives navigate the responsibilities of caring for children. During FY26, the program supported 139 families and 244 children through family coaching, support groups, financial assistance, and community partnerships.

Every child served remained safely with their relative caregiver—a 100 percent placement stability rate.

Strengthening Family Connections

The **Access & Visitation Program** helped 371 adults and children navigate parenting, visitation, and family court challenges. Referrals came from 29 of Tennessee's 32 judicial districts. Staff also delivered 70 community outreach presentations, engaging more than 1,500 Tennesseans.

Tonya's Story

When Tonya entered TCSEPP, she was dealing with unemployment, unstable housing, and the lingering effects of domestic violence. She and her coordinator worked through those needs together. Tonya secured stable housing, obtained healthcare services, developed her employment readiness skills, and found work. She is now building a more stable future for herself and her children. Her experience shows how support across several areas of life can help a family move forward.

Strengthening the Workforce That Serves Tennessee

Tennessee families rely on teachers, child care professionals, social workers, advocates, case managers, and community leaders every day. Much of SWORPS' work during FY26 focused on giving that workforce access to training, practical support, and the systems needed to do their jobs well.

Supporting Early Childhood Professionals

TNPAL and related workforce systems supported 87,061 professionals across Tennessee and maintained tens of thousands of education and credential records. Workforce tracking, professional development support, and credentialing infrastructure help providers document their qualifications and continue developing their skills.

Support for Relative Caregivers

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) provided training, technical assistance, quality improvement, and licensing support to child care providers. Staff expanded professional development opportunities and used flexible service delivery approaches to reach rural providers. Partnerships with state agencies, higher education institutions, and community organizations helped extend access to that support throughout the region.

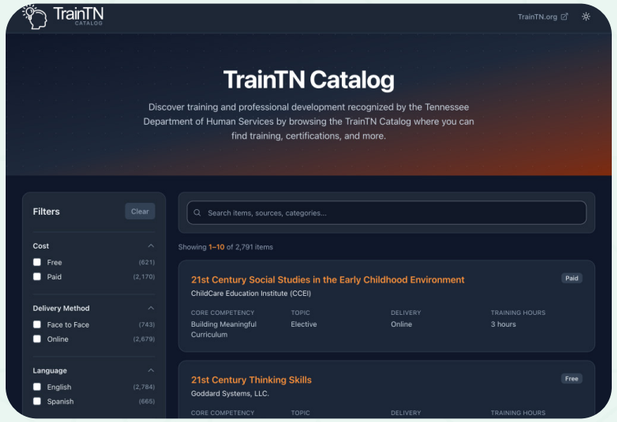
Strengthening Child Protection Systems

Through **CAPTA-CJA** activities, SWORPS brought together multidisciplinary leaders, task forces, and citizen review panels to address Tennessee's child protection systems. Their collaborations supported improvements in child abuse investigations, court programs, child welfare policy, and practice, contributing to the work of professionals responsible for protecting and supporting vulnerable children.

Building Technology That Supports Better Decisions

The **Division of Technology & Development (DTD)** spent FY26 improving the systems that providers and program staff use to access training, manage information, and meet reporting requirements. These improvements help people spend less time navigating administrative processes and more time on the work those processes support.

Modernizing Workforce Systems



DTD launched the new **TrainTN Catalog** and **Trainer Application Portal**, making training access and trainer approval more efficient. The division also continued supporting and expanding TNPAL, TAM, TrainTN, and related workforce systems used by tens of thousands of professionals statewide.

Reducing Administrative Burden

The **ELAP-to-21APR API integration** enabled Tennessee's first automated federal reporting submission. Automated data exchange replaced manual reporting processes, reducing workload and improving consistency and accuracy. DTD expanded API-enabled infrastructure in other initiatives as well, allowing systems to exchange information more effectively.

Preparing for Future Development

The **Family Stability Matrix** launched as the first production application on **SWORPS.io** during FY26. Alongside that launch, DTD continued adopting AI-powered development tools and modernizing its infrastructure to support future applications.

Supporting Service Delivery

Through May, the **Tennessee Child Care Help Desk** had handled **5,645 emails** and **8,180 phone calls**, with more than **14,000 contacts** anticipated for the fiscal year. The Help Desk gives providers a place to get information and resolve problems as they continue serving children and families.

5,645 emails handled

8,180 phone calls

14,000+ contacts

Understanding Communities Through Data & Partnership

Understanding a community requires listening to the people who live there as well as examining the available data. SWORPS brought those sources of knowledge together during FY26 to help partners understand local conditions and make decisions grounded in their communities.

Research Informed by Community Voice

The **Division of Applied Research & Evaluation (DARE)** expanded its partnerships across Tennessee and beyond. In the evaluation of Knoxville's violence reduction efforts, community involvement helped shape the work. Learning with community members brought local knowledge into the evaluation and reflected SWORPS' commitment to research informed by the people most familiar with the issues being studied.

Supporting Community Planning

KnoxHMIS provided data infrastructure for homelessness response and community planning. During FY26, HMIS-supported projects served **4,419** individuals, and **449** individuals exited to permanent housing. More than **50** partner projects received data quality support, while more than **50** volunteers participated in the annual Point-in-Time Count.

The program also launched a **Coordinated Entry Workgroup** and completed major federal reporting activities. This work gives local partners information to support planning, resource allocation, and decisions about their homelessness response.

Strengthening the Workforce That Serves Tennessee

Tennessee families rely on teachers, child care professionals, social workers, advocates, case managers, and community leaders every day. Much of SWORPS' work during FY26 focused on giving that workforce access to training, practical support, and the systems needed to do their jobs well.

Expanding Research Partnerships

The **Tennessee Safety Net Research Consortium** grew from two primary projects toward a portfolio expected to include five active initiatives. That growth reflects increasing demand for collaborative research that can inform practical decisions and improvements in systems.

Developing a Longer-Term Research Agenda

DARE helped advance TCSEPP's emerging research agenda through relationship-building, stakeholder engagement, and long-term planning. This work supports a deeper understanding of the program beyond its performance measures.

Across its projects, DARE conducted interviews, focus groups, surveys, evaluations, implementation studies, and data analyses to inform policy and practice. The purpose of that work is to help partners make decisions that improve the lives of the people they serve.

Building The Foundation

Every SWORPS project depends on people who manage budgets, support employees, maintain equipment, and keep the organization's operations running. During FY26, the Business Office strengthened these services while supporting a growing workforce and project portfolio.

Human Resources

The HR team supported the hiring of ***27 employees*** and completed more than **39 classifications** and reclassifications. It also developed a comprehensive HR Process Manual and created payroll reconciliation and compliance tracking systems to make its processes more consistent and efficient.

Enhanced onboarding and employee development resources, expanded management training, and workforce support activities helped staff and supervisors navigate their responsibilities. The FY26–FY28 Human Resources Strategic Plan set a direction for continuing that work as SWORPS grows.

Budget, Finance & Operations

Budget, Finance & Operations supported **26 proposal submissions** valued at nearly **$50 million.** The team improved forecasting, labor distribution review, effort certification, purchasing processes, and compliance activities to strengthen financial stewardship.

Other improvements covered accounting, technology inventory management, contract support, and procurement. The implementation of Intune security management across more than 100 SWORPS devices added to the team's work supporting secure, reliable operations.

Looking Ahead

As SWORPS enters FY27, we will continue building on the work described in this report. Technology modernization and expanded research and evaluation partnerships will remain priorities, alongside support for the workforce and providers who serve Tennessee's children, families, and communities.

We will also continue developing responsible, mission-focused uses of artificial intelligence and creating opportunities for colleagues across disciplines to work together. These efforts will support our own organizational capacity and our partners' ability to improve outcomes for Tennesseans.

Our staff's dedication and our partners' trust made this year's accomplishments possible. We are grateful for both as we begin the next year of work together.

SWORPS

Research. Technology. Human Connection.

Leveraging Research, Technology, and Human Connection to Improve the Lives of Tennesseans.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE
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