

**Tennessee Disability Pathfinder has phone, Web, and print resources in English and Spanish to connect the Tennessee disability community with service providers.** Referral services, free of cost, are provided to persons with disabilities, family members, service providers, and advocates. Pathfinder is a joint project of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development.

### Education-related Events On Pathfinder Calendar

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder maintains the Pathfinder Disability Calendar, an Internet calendar of disability-related events. Organizations post events to this calendar, the most comprehensive listing of Tennessee disability events. The events below are just a sample of the more than 200 events currently listed on the calendar by over 70 individuals from across the State. For more information about these or other events, visit [www.familypathfinder.org](http://www.familypathfinder.org) and click on "Pathfinder Disability Calendar."

- Basic Rights—A Parent's Introduction to Special Education Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Preparing for Transition
- Evaluation and Assessments
- Adaptations for Promoting Play at Home & School
- Managing the Differentiated Classroom
- Instructional Strategies
- Inclusion and Least Restrictive Environment
- Supporting Positive Behavior at Home and School
- Working as a Team.
- And many more!*

If you would like to submit a calendar listing for a conference, training, meeting, or other disability-related event, please contact

Ashley Coulter at [ashley.coulter@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ashley.coulter@vanderbilt.edu) or 800-640-4636 (ext. 15).

### Resource Spotlight: Tennessee Education Resources

These education-related resources—and more!—can be found on the Pathfinder Web site at [www.familypathfinder.org](http://www.familypathfinder.org).

#### *Disability Coalition on Education of Tennessee (DCE)*

A statewide alliance of family members, educators, state and advocacy organizations focused on bringing about positive change in the education of students with and without disabilities. DCE maintains an e-mail list to keep subscribers aware of educational concerns and happenings throughout the State. For more information, or to join, contact DCE at [dce@dce-tn.org](mailto:dce@dce-tn.org).

#### *Project LINK—Leaders In Education Networking for Kids*

A program that educates parents of children with disabilities about the special education process so that they may advocate for their own children's education and assist other parents. Through the efforts of three regional coordinators, LINK strives to empower and organize parents to form local parent education groups, which can then be "linked" up with other parent groups and statewide educational initiatives. The project also works toward promoting school systems that are welcoming and include and support all children in general classrooms.

## *The* REFORM *of* TENNESSEE'S EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM

BY JAMIE KILPATRICK, DIRECTOR

Tennessee's Early Intervention System,

or TEIS, is a program within the Division of Special Education of Tennessee's Department of Education. TEIS serves children from birth to age three and their families, who qualify based upon a percentage of developmental delay or a diagnosed condition within the State's eligibility criteria. TEIS is a voluntary program also known as Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).



Jamie Kilpatrick (left) with TEIS staff.

Photo by Ruth Wiseman

Early intervention programs vary from state to state, but are similar in their quest to provide young children experiencing delays and their families with early developmental support. In 2006, 7718 eligible children and their families statewide chose to participate in TEIS.

In the Spring of 2006, the Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination (GOCCC) began a policy analysis of the TEIS and Tennessee Infant Parent Services (TIPS), a program within TEIS. The purpose of this study was to guide Tennessee toward an efficient, effective service system and to provide as many families as possible with quality early intervention services.

The study involved input from the State and local level, including parents, teachers, therapists, parent advisors, service coordinators, Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) members and others. The scope of the analysis was a comprehensive assessment of the service system, administration and financing of early intervention services in Tennessee.

Several factors prompted the analysis, including a steady growth in early intervention spending without a similar increase in the number of families served; the program experienced cost overruns

East Tennessee Coordinator: Mary Ann Schenk, 423-267-0500  
 Middle Tennessee Coordinator: Loria Hubbard-Richardson,  
 615-215-2065  
 West Tennessee Coordinator: Treva Maitland, 731-559-4187

### *Regional Resource Centers*

Established by the Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education, these three centers provide information and guidance to teachers, administrators, parents and others who have or serve children with disabilities. Centers are staffed with educational consultants who provide a variety of services, including technical assistance through management and compliance issues, and training in areas such as early childhood/preschool, secondary transition, behavior and autism services.

East Tennessee Center: 865-594-5691  
 Middle Tennessee Center: 615-532-3258  
 West Tennessee Center: 731-421-5074

### *Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP)*

STEP provides free information, advocacy training, and support services to parents of children eligible to receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). STEP services are available to Tennessee residents who are parents or family members of a special education student or a student who may need special help in school (birth through age 22). There is no charge for services to parents. For more information, contact STEP at [information@tnstep.org](mailto:information@tnstep.org) or 800-280-STEP (7837).

### *What You Need to Know About Special Education*

The Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland publishes this free, easy to read legal help booklet. The 36-page booklet explains "how special education works in schools" and includes sample letters families can use to request testing, mediation or a due process hearing. The booklet is available on the Legal Aid Society's Web site at <http://www.las.org> (click on "Self Help Booklets") or by calling 1-800-238-1443.

### **Stay Connected With Pathfinder**

Pathfinder publishes *The Pathfinder*, an e-newsletter containing information about program activities and other disability-related resources in Tennessee. Past issues of the publication are archived on the Pathfinder Web site (under Pathfinder Features, click on "The Pathfinder: News from Tennessee Disability Pathfinder"). To receive future news from Tennessee Disability Pathfinder via e-mail, please contact us at [tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu).

### **For Further Information**

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder  
 (615) 322-8529 (Nashville area, English & Español)  
 (800) 640-4636 (toll-free, English & Español)  
 (615) 321-8834 (fax)  
 TTY/TDD users: please dial 711 for free relay service  
[www.familypathfinder.org](http://www.familypathfinder.org)  
[tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu)

*Melissa Fortson is information & referral specialist/program coordinator with Tennessee Disability Pathfinder.*

in three consecutive fiscal years. Another factor was that the option became available in the federal law to extend services up to age five for children who are eligible for Part B of IDEA, however, without additional federal resources.

Additionally, significant local differences in the administration of programs and implementation of services created many inequities across the State, causing major differences in eligibility determination procedures as well as differences in the services provided. There also was a recognized need to find and serve more children. Lastly, it is a policy of the Administration to manage State government effectively and efficiently. These programs did not meet those criteria. Each of these factors contributed to the timeliness of the Analysis.

The findings were evaluated and several recommendations were made, including streamlining the eligibility determination process, strengthening service coordination, and developing and implementing functional Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs). Also recommended was to unify TEIS, TIPS, and other early intervention resources through reorganization of State and District level administrations.

The group also suggested exploring the development of Tennessee early intervention services for families whose children would not be eligible for special education services at age three. Currently, TEIS

services are no longer available to them and these children must await entry into Pre-K programs. The Department believes that 1,200 children annually are in need of this State defined program. The final recommendation was to implement other fund expansion opportunities to benefit Tennessee's children with disabilities and their families. This will be accomplished through initiated public and private partnerships.

The Reform of Tennessee's Early Intervention System is currently underway. State and District level staff have been hired to implement and research the recommendations presented by the Analysis. Some of the offices will be relocating to accommodate a larger staff due to the unification of the former TEIS and TIPS programs into the new State Point of Entry Offices for TEIS.

Early intervention is crucial to providing a good education to children with disabilities. Families with concerns about their children's development or would like more information about TEIS may call 1-800-852-7157.

*Jamie Kilpatrick is a Paris, Tennessee native. He has served in the TEIS system for 10 years in various capacities. He currently lives in Dickson County with his wife, Amy, and his three children, Houston, Elizabeth, and Madeline, all age five.*