

# PARTNERS

BlueCare Tennessee Managed Long-Term Services and Supports Program

News and tips to support MLTSS partners and enhanced care for our members

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Tennessee LTSS Workforce Quality Improvement Survey Results Now Available
- Monitoring Patients' Risk of Falling
- Becoming an Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES Provider
- Upcoming Changes to Electronic Visit Verification Model Type and Vendor
- Aligned Death Review Process Requirements
- Combining Independent Living Skills Training (ILST) and Enabling Technology
- Reportable Events and Interventions
- Committed to Service
- How Are We Doing?



# Tennessee LTSS Workforce Quality Improvement Survey Results Now Available

Each year, the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) partner with TennCare and the University of Minnesota to conduct a Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) workforce survey for Tennessee. The results from last year's survey (2023 data) are now available.

Here are some key highlights:

- **Turnover:** There was a 7% decrease in annual turnover for full-time direct support professionals (DSPs) and caregivers.
- **Vacancies:** Full-time vacancies for DSPs and caregivers decreased by 2%.
- **Wages:** The average wage for DSPs reached over \$15 per hour.
- **Overtime:** Overtime hours remained high, totaling 2,399,338 hours, but decreased from the prior year significantly.

While there's still room for improvement, these results show a positive trend for the LTSS workforce in Tennessee. For detailed survey results and regional data, [click here](#).

## Monitoring Risk of Falling

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports one out of four adults over age 65 falls each year. And falling once doubles the chance of falling again. Nationally, 37% of adults over age 65 who fell had injuries that needed medical care or temporarily restricted their activity.

The CDC also reports just over 31% of older adults in Tennessee have fallen. And 33.4% of Tennesseans have a disability. That's nearly 5% higher than the national average. Physical and cognitive disabilities are the most commonly reported disabilities.

It's estimated 30% of people with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) fall each year. Members with IDD are more likely to fall at a younger age, some as early as age 18. For those who fall, it's estimated two-thirds will fall again. They also have a risk of significant injury from falling.



## Year 7 survey coming soon

The Year 7 survey, which collects data from 2024, is set to begin **June 2, 2025**. Please expect to hear from a workforce representative soon regarding the survey. We ask and strongly encourage providers to participate in this important effort, as it benefits not only your individual agencies, but the entire LTSS workforce in Tennessee. This data has many uses and benefits both regionally and for the entire state.

After completing the survey, you'll receive individual workforce profiles for your agency. If you've received your Year 6 survey profile and would like to review it with our workforce teams for personalized staffing support, please reach out to Christian Ceccotti at [Christian\\_ceccotti@bcbst.com](mailto:Christian_ceccotti@bcbst.com) or your regional Workforce Development Specialist.

Several things increase the risk of falls for older adults and adults with a disability. Small changes can lower these risk factors.

- Conducting fall risk assessments can help determine someone's risk of falling. You can find resources on the [CDC website](#).
- Lower body weakness can increase risk of falling. Gentle impact exercises can help strengthen these muscles. People can modify Tai Chi to their ability level to help improve strength and balance.
- Certain medications may increase fall risk. Review medications for possible side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness, balance issues and muscle weakness.
- Homes themselves may increase a person's risk of falling. Talk with the people you support about risks at home and do a walk through to spot potential hazards. Securing rugs and making sure the home is well lit can decrease the chance of falls. Make sure any adaptive equipment is working correctly. And double check the bathroom for safety risks.
- Physical and occupational therapy can help, too. Therapists can customize plans for strengthening muscles, increasing mobility and completing daily activities safely.

It's important to talk with the people you support about their risk of falling and how to lower that risk. And monitor for any changes in risk as they age or develop new medical conditions.

## Becoming an Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES Provider

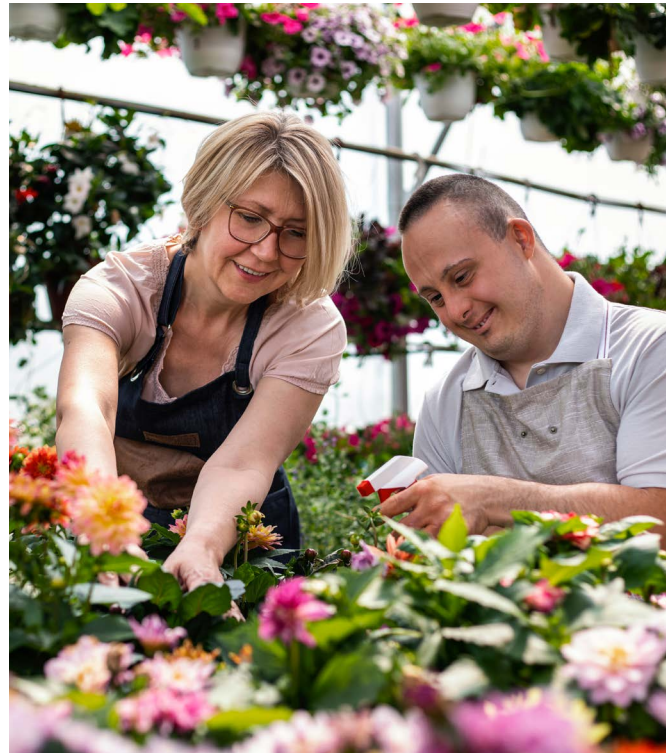
Tennessee's Medicaid program includes services for members as they age and for members with disabilities. ECF CHOICES is a waiver program that helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities find jobs and learn skills to live more independently.

Many services available are similar to services provided by CHOICES providers already. ECF CHOICES members also have access to Community Integration Support Services and Independent Living Skills Training. These services help members be active participants in their communities.

ECF CHOICES is expected to expand in 2025, allowing thousands more people to participate. If you're interested in adding ECF CHOICES services, here's some helpful information.

You may already offer some of these services through the CHOICES program. Updates to your policies and procedures and training hours for your staff may be all you need to be part of this program. If you have any questions about this program or joining, please contact your Provider Network Manager. You can also contact the DDA at [DDA.Provider.Application@tn.gov](mailto:DDA.Provider.Application@tn.gov) or **(615) 532-6530**.

If you're ready to apply to be part of ECF CHOICES, visit the DDA website [here](#).



## Upcoming Changes to Electronic Visit Verification Model Type and Vendor

Starting **Aug. 1, 2025**, the Division of TennCare and its MCOs will move to an Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) Open Model. Right now, we use Sandata to collect EVV data and submit it to TennCare. But starting Aug. 1, we'll move from using Sandata to using CareBridge. We'll provide training in the new system, and we'll make sure it meets state and federal requirements.

You'll also have the option to choose your own EVV vendor starting in August. If you choose your own vendor, you're responsible for making sure the vendor meets state and federal EVV requirements. The EVV vendor system will need to track services at a task level and include client verification of services performed.

All EVV vendors must integrate with your billing system. We can't recommend a specific vendor, but vendors must comply with all state and federal guidelines and integrate with the Availity® billing system. Costs will vary depending on the EVV vendor selected.

Over the last two years, we've moved away from using tablets for data collection. Mobile apps are the preferred method for data collection, but other verifications will still be allowed.

If you want to use your own vendor, forward that information to [providerrelations@bcbst.com](mailto:providerrelations@bcbst.com) by May 31. If you'll be using our vendor, we'll provide agency training starting in May for full implementation Aug. 1.

If you have any questions about EVV Open Model, the shift to CareBridge or making sure you're on the email list for future trainings, please reach out to your Provider Network Manager or email [providerrelations@bcbst.com](mailto:providerrelations@bcbst.com).

## Aligned Death Review Process Requirements

The Aligned Death Review Process sets the requirements for conducting the systematic review of the death of a member who was receiving one of the following services at the time of death: 1915(c), Katie Beckett Part A, ECF CHOICES and/or services through an Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities program. The systematic review of death identifies the cause of death, any circumstances and/or factors which contributed to the death, and identification of any preventive measures that would improve supports and services for other members moving forward.

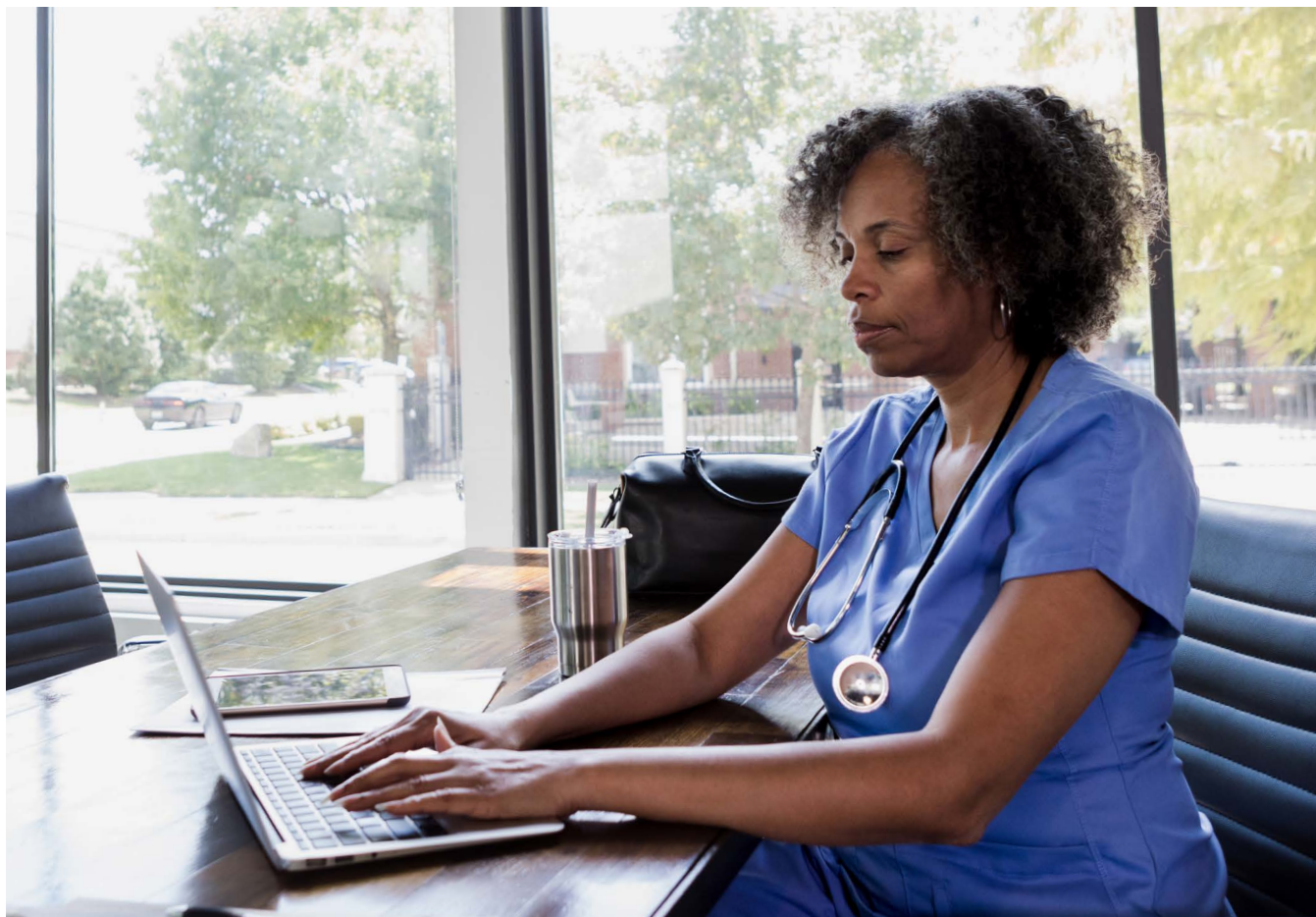
In addition to completing and submitting an electronic Reportable Event Form for Tier 1 Unexpected/Unexplained Deaths and Reportable Medical Deaths (other than those that are unexpected/unexplained), providers are also required to call the on-call investigator within four hours of discovery and to electronically submit a completed Notice of Death form (NOD). The NOD form is located [here](#) and must be submitted to BlueCare Tennessee and the Department of Disability and Aging (DDA) as soon as possible, but no later than the close of the next business day after becoming aware of the member's death. The email addresses are located at the top of the NOD form.

Residential services providers are required to initiate an Initial Agency Death Review immediately, but no less than 24 hours after becoming aware of the member's death.

Residential providers are also required to electronically submit a completed Initial Agency Death Review (IADR) form. The IADR form is located [here](#) and must be submitted to BlueCare Tennessee and the DDA as soon as possible, but no later than five business days after becoming aware of the member's death. The email addresses are located at the top of the IADR form.

For more detailed information about the Aligned Death Review Process, please visit the [DDA's website](#).

**Please note: This process doesn't apply to CHOICES members.**



# Combining Independent Living Skills Training (ILST) and Enabling Technology

For ECF CHOICES members, ILST and Enabling Technology are two services that can be used together to help members live more independently.

ILST provides education and training to support a member's ability to independently perform these routine daily living skills:

- Personal hygiene
- Food and meal preparation
- Home maintenance
- Money management
- Accessing and using community resources
- Community mobility
- Parenting
- Computer use
- Driving evaluation and lessons

One challenge for ECF CHOICES providers offering ILST services is knowing if skills learned in training are practiced and applied across different environments consistently. Teaching a skill in one session doesn't guarantee retention and carryover to the next. Members, with their families and caregivers, may not know how to keep the momentum going after initial instruction and fall back into old habits. This can slow down the member's progress towards their goals and independence.



So how can providers bridge the gap between initial skill instruction and successful member independence and generalization? One way is to integrate technology as a natural support for ILST services.

With Enabling Technology, providers can support members in developing essential life skills, increasing independence and improving the generalization of these skills across different settings.

Here are some ways providers can use Enabling Technology to support skill development and generalization.

- **Interactive learning tools:** Video modeling is evidence-based, specific and consistent. Applications that use videos, pictures, and audio to coach, guide, and remind provide a means to support skill development. It can help with skills like personal hygiene, food prep, home maintenance, money management and more.
- **GPS, mobile applications and wearables:** Learning a new skill is one step towards independence. Having tools that provide visual, auditory, and tactile prompts and guidance, as well as real-time check-ins, can be essential when applying newly learned skills to different situations.
- **Automated assistance:** Timers, sensors, alarms, mobile and standalone equipment, and remote support can help members manage their health and safety independently. Members can set reminders to take medication, attend appointments or complete household tasks. These tools reduce the need for constant caregiver supervision, allowing members to perform daily tasks with greater autonomy.
- **Virtual Reality (VR):** VR can simulate real-life scenarios, allowing members to practice skills like navigating public spaces and transit or simulated driving in a controlled environment.

Providers play a vital role in helping members achieve greater independence in their lives, and Enabling Technology can improve outcomes for our members. Through circle of support discussions, members can consider whether Enabling Technology would be beneficial as an additional service to their patient-centered support plan to enhance and/or fade from ILST services.

For questions related to Enabling Technology and ILST services, contact Katie Walters at [kathryn\\_walters@bcbst.com](mailto:kathryn_walters@bcbst.com).

## Reportable Events and Interventions

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Your compassion while serving our members is invaluable to their experience, but so are your observations. Reportable Event Management (REM) is one important component of an overall approach for ensuring the health, safety, individual freedom and quality of life of members receiving home- and community-based services and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities services.

When members are at risk, you're required to Report It Now. When you report these issues, they can be addressed, which helps keep the members you serve safe. Documenting the risk also helps protect you if there's ever a question in the future.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Report It Now and who to contact for a Reportable Event.



## Committed to Service

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As your partner in serving our CHOICES and ECF CHOICES members, we're committed to providing you unmatched service and support. Stay current with the most current news and program guidance. Visit us at [bluecare.bcbst.com](http://bluecare.bcbst.com) to find resources, updates and the most recent version of the CHOICES newsletter.

### How Are We Doing?

As a valued BlueCare Tennessee provider, we welcome your feedback and want to hear from you. If you have questions and/or concerns about a process, or if there's an individual that you'd like to point out for good service, please email us at: [CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com](mailto:CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com). We look forward to hearing from you.

## Provider Network Manager and Workforce Development Contacts

Manager	Region	Phone	Email
Britney Douglas, Provider Relations Supervisor	Statewide	(615) 427-3782	<a href="mailto:britney_douglas@bcbst.com">britney_douglas@bcbst.com</a>
Phyllis White, Director, MLTSS	Middle	(615) 295-9680	<a href="mailto:phyllis_white@bcbst.com">phyllis_white@bcbst.com</a>
Recie Gunartt, Provider Network Manager	West	(901) 201-7786	<a href="mailto:recie_gunartt@bcbst.com">recie_gunartt@bcbst.com</a>
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Corey Vance, Claims Liaison	East	(615) 761-8732	<a href="mailto:corey_vance@bcbst.com">corey_vance@bcbst.com</a>
Nichole Phillips-Brock, Employment Services & Supports Specialist	Statewide	(615) 651-9076	<a href="mailto:nichole_phillips@bcbst.com">nichole_phillips@bcbst.com</a>
Aimee Rogers, Employment Services & Supports Specialist	Statewide	(423) 362-2562	<a href="mailto:aimee_rogers@bcbst.com">aimee_rogers@bcbst.com</a>
Kathryn Walters, Technology Champion	Statewide	(865) 340-1363	<a href="mailto:kathryn_walters@bcbst.com">kathryn_walters@bcbst.com</a>
Evy Boyer, Housing and Transition Manager	Statewide	(615) 218-2642	<a href="mailto:evelyn_boyer@bcbst.com">evelyn_boyer@bcbst.com</a>

## Where to Turn for Help

Your Service Need	Operational Area	Contact
Eligibility Services, Claims, Inquiries	BlueCare Provider Services/ Eligibility Service Line	1-888-747-8955
General Contracting/ Credentialing Questions	Provider Network Services/ Credentialing	1-800-924-7141, ext. 5775 (Provider Network Services) 1-800-357-0395 (Credentialing)
Member Related Questions/Supports, Member Emergencies (After Hours/Weekends Only) During Regular Hours Contact Coordinator Directly	Support/Care Coordination	1-800-262-2873
Sandata/EVV Tech Support	Sandata Client Relations (EVV)	1-855-389-4843
Availity Claim Submission Tech Support	Availity	1-800-282-4548
CHOICES Web Portal Claims Tech Support	e-Business	(423) 535-5717, select option 2
Provider Education, General Provider Support, Assistance with Contracting/Credentialing	CHOICES/ECF Provider Relations	<a href="mailto:CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com">CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com</a>
Authorizations Support, General Billing – Release of Units	Provider Inquiry Specialist Team	<a href="mailto:ProviderAuthIssues@bcbst.com">ProviderAuthIssues@bcbst.com</a> OR call 1-888-747-8955, select option 2
Change of Ownership Notifications, Questions/Concerns	Provider Relations	<a href="mailto:Provider_CHOW@bcbst.com">Provider_CHOW@bcbst.com</a>
EVV Exceptions	Provider Specialist Team	<a href="mailto:EVV_Exceptions@bcbst.com">EVV_Exceptions@bcbst.com</a>