

NEWSLETTER

WELCOME 2025



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Parent Training and Information Services

TNSTEP's vision is to ensure a brighter future for children and youth in Tennessee.

"We are experts at informing and empowering parents of children and youth with disabilities who receive education services."

-Karen Harrison, TNSTEP Executive Director

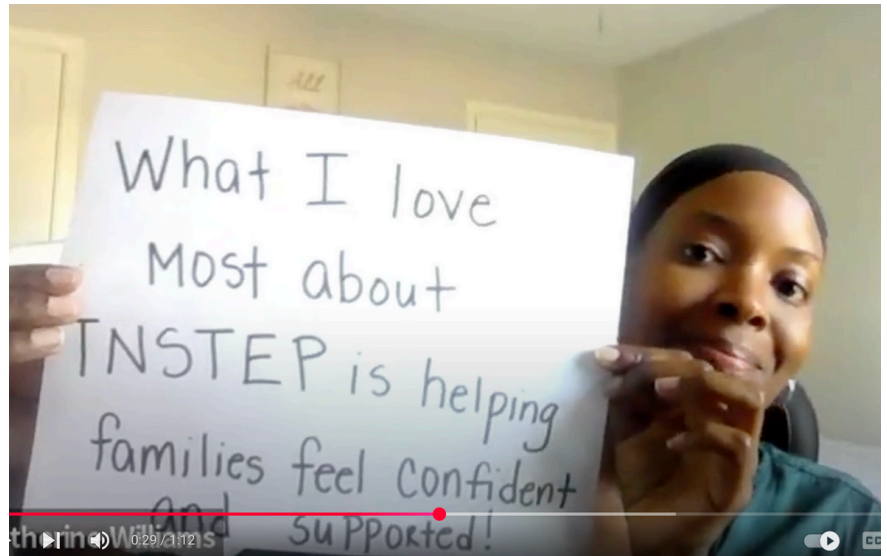


WHAT DOES THE TEAM LOVE MOST ABOUT TNSTEP?

In this special feature, we invite you to see TNSTEP through the eyes of those who know it best—our dedicated team!

Click the link below to watch "What Does the Team Love Most About TNSTEP?" and hear directly from our staff about their passion for supporting families and children with disabilities. Enjoy the full video!

[WATCH FULL MESSAGE](#)



Lisa Gosnell

Data, Research & Information Coordinator

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

1. **What is your superpower?** Data and research
2. **Who is your hero?** Davy Crockett, I have collect his memorabilia for years
3. **Any hidden talents?** Genealogist, writer, historian, event planner, artist/crafter
4. **One thing on your bucket list:** Publish a Family History book
5. **Favorite sports team?** Tennessee Volunteers
6. **Milestone in your life?** Celebrated 40 years of marriage with my soulmate this year.

UNDERSTANDING VR AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

REAL TRANSITION PARTNERS
LUNCHTIME LEARNING



Understanding Vocational Rehabilitation and Pre-Employment Transition Services

(Pre-ETS): Part 2

A presentation by NTACTION-The Collaborative
We will discuss:

- The continuum of VR services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and VR Transition Services
- VR Transition Services and who can receive them.
- What an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) includes and the role students, youth and parents can play in the development of the IPE.

February 11, 2025
12:00 - 1:30

Questions contact: Dawn Monaco, dmonaco@spanadvocacy.org

SOCIOS REALES DE LA TRANSICIÓN
APRENDIENDO DURANTE EL ALMUERZO



Entendiendo la Rehabilitación Vocacional y Los Servicios de Transición Previos al Empleo Transition Services

(Pre-ETS, por sus siglas en inglés): Parte 2

Una presentación de: NTACTION (por sus siglas en inglés)-The Collaborative

Hablaremos sobre:

- La continuidad de los servicios vocacionales (VR, por sus siglas en inglés), incluidos los Servicios de Transición Previos al Empleo y los Servicios de Transición de la Rehabilitación Vocacional.
- Los Servicios de Transición de Rehabilitación Vocacional y quién puede recibirlos.
- Que incluye el Plan Individualizado de Empleo (IPE, por sus siglas en inglés) y las funciones que pueden desempeñar los estudiantes, los jóvenes y los padres en el desarrollo del IPE (por sus siglas en inglés).

Febrero 11, 2025
12:00 - 1:30 PM

Para preguntas contacte a Dawn Monaco al correo electrónico, dmonaco@spanadvocacy.org

**DOWNLOAD
ENGLISH FLYER**

**DOWNLOAD
SPANISH FLYER**



Early Intervention Lunch and Learns Series with



Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think at Home

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2025

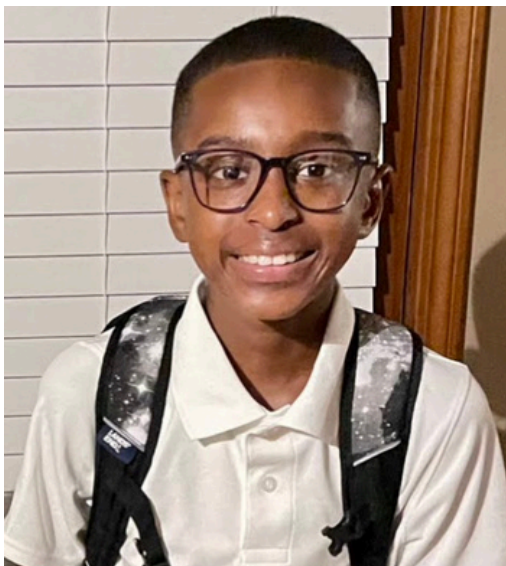
Time: 11:30 am - 12:30 pm Central
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm Eastern

MEETING LINK

NEW CHANGING TABLES AT JOHNSONVILLE STATE HISTORIC PARK

We're pleased to announce new accessibility enhancements at Tennessee State Parks. Adult-sized changing tables have now been installed at four more parks, improving access for all visitors, including those like the Hood family. This initiative, supported by partnerships with the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging, Tennessee State Parks Conservancy, and the Tennessee Valley Authority's North and East Regions, enhances our commitment to inclusivity. For the full story and a list of parks with new facilities, click the video link below.

[WATCH FULL VIDEO](#)



"The TNSTEP program supported my family during one of the most challenging times of our lives."

A WIN FOR THE NEAL FAMILY

The TNSTEP program supported my family during one of the most challenging times of our lives. In 2022, my son faced the possibility of being dismissed from school due to behaviors directly related to his disability. Thankfully, another parent referred me to TNSTEP, and they immediately stepped in to help us navigate this difficult situation. After meeting with TNSTEP and discussing our options, as well as receiving invaluable resources on effective advocacy, I felt empowered to fight for my son's rights. With the materials they provided, I was able to file an administrative state complaint, which revealed that the school had indeed violated my son's rights. The school quickly addressed everything outlined in the complaint, and now my son, who is in 6th grade, is thriving in an inclusive classroom setting with a dedicated teacher's aide. I'm incredibly grateful for the ongoing support and expertise TNSTEP has provided, especially when it comes to navigating the complexities of IEP meetings and ensuring my son receives the education he deserves."

- Neal Family

tnstep's Year in Review

2024



Same mission. New name.

Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement:

Formed and activated a Government Affairs Committee in partnership with the Education Trust to enhance relationships with state and local leaders.

Partnered with the Nashville Predators Foundation, Community Foundation of Middle TN, and PEATC's Waze to Adulthood to host the inspiring STEP Up To The Plate (SUTP) Transition Tour.

Program Enhancements and Achievements:

Received a \$2,475 grant from the Nashville Predators Foundation, aiding young people with disabilities.

Produced mission videos in four languages with the support of the TDC Center, expanding service accessibility statewide.

Advocacy and Leadership:

Participated in speaking engagements at the Dyslexia Advisory Council and the Early Intervention Council to address barriers for non-English speaking families.

Joey Ellis was reaffirmed as chair of the Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

Advocated for disability rights during Disability Day on the Hill and Disability Day of the Bluff through SUTP Youth Council participation.

Educational and Training Initiatives:

Held a strategic planning and goal-setting retreat with staff and board members.

Presented at three national conferences to bolster the efforts of other parent training and information centers.

Launched three new early intervention family-focused guides in partnership with TEIS, Arc TN, and TDC, aimed at helping parents make informed educational choices for young children (ages 3-5).

Community Support and Crisis Response:

Raised and distributed over \$10,000 in supplies to families affected by Hurricane Helene.

Patricia Valladares joined the Deaf Blind National Center's Community of Excellence, focusing on educational challenges for non-English speaking families of children who are deaf-blind.

Public Relations and Media Engagement:

Increased media presence to address the disproportionate discipline of students of various ethnic backgrounds in Tennessee schools, highlighting critical issues in the disability community.



Tennessee's Fall Engagement Tour 2024



tnstep YOUTH TOUR



NO PARENT OF A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY SHOULD HAVE TO WALK THIS JOURNEY ALONE.

We believe parents know their children best and CAN BE their child's best advocate.

Families who receive TNSTEP services report these results:

- Increased skills to address their children's mental health and behavioral needs;
- Consistent and improved school attendance;
- Increase in functional skills that impact independent living;
- Improved academic achievement that leads to graduation and employment.



Toll-Free: (800) 280-STEP
Español: (800) 975-2919
Telephone: (423) 639-0125
FAX: (423) 636-8217



Physical Address

TNSTEP – GREENEVILLE, TN
113 Austin Street
Greenville, TN 37745



Mailing Address

TNSTEP – GREENEVILLE, TN
1113 Tusculum Blvd., #393
Greenville, TN 37745



TNSTEP – NASHVILLE, TN
955 Woodland Street
Nashville, TN 37206

gethelp@tnstep.info



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