



A Message from our CEO

Each day I wake up with a mental countdown: one month 'til school starts...two weeks...just a few days before students return to school. And I feel anxiety mixed with hope and gratitude as the hours tick by and our team is busily preparing to serve them—in whatever form their return to school takes. I am so grateful for them, as I am for superintendents, principals and school faculty who are working tirelessly in very uncertain circumstances to ensure that students will return to the structure and support that school provides. I also know that our students have had a rough summer following a rough spring semester, and it's all taken a serious toll on their mental health and social emotional development.

The Child Wellbeing Task Force, led by the Tennessee Department of Education, just released the [Initial COVID-19 Impact Report](#) and [Summary](#). Their findings echoed many of our own from the CIS-TN report, [Supporting Families Through a Global Pandemic](#). They also reinforced my concern about the current emotional state of students. Research has long told us that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have physical and mental health ramifications that persist well into adulthood. This includes not only increased depression and addiction, but greater likelihood of chronic health problems, as well. Furthermore, the report points out that crises such as COVID-19 lead to increased domestic violence and child abuse. There is no doubt our students are experiencing all of these issues. Schools can't solve them, particularly now. They require resources and expertise.

Here are a few of the more startling data points the impact report pulled from across our state

- Tennessee ranks 39th in overall child wellbeing
- We are in the bottom 12 of states for children with a mental health disorder who received treatment
- Just 20% of districts report meeting the goal of one certified social worker for every 1,500 students
- 53% of district leaders are prepared and able to address or check on the wellness & safety of students

While our schools are working valiantly, they cannot be expected to meet the many needs of students by themselves. Our school system was simply never designed or intended to do that. Youth serving organizations such as CIS-TN and many others are perfectly poised to partner with schools in support of students and families. Whether they need grief counseling, food assistance, temporary housing or help applying to college, we are there for students and their families, freeing up schools to focus on education.

I want to thank you for your support of our organization and [ask for your continued support](#) through these trying times. We are currently in 40 schools, touching lives in Nashville and 15 rural communities all across the state. If you are able to give, know that your contribution is supporting the wellbeing of almost 20,000 students, who are all navigating uncharted territory. If you can't give just now, please cheer on our schools, who are working so hard, and please make time to connect with the students in your life.

I appreciate you,



Samantha Wigand
CEO

LOOKING AHEAD

School Year 2020-21

CIS-TN remains a committed partner to our schools and will continue to do whatever it takes to ensure students receive the integrated supports necessary for their success. Our team has been concerned about our students over these months and thinking through how to best support them in the new school year. That is why we are preparing to provide more training and resources to our coordinators to help them when mitigating the trauma their students are feeling.

This year CIS-TN will provide...

- **Social-emotional learning.** We will be especially focusing our work with students around social-emotional learning by assessing students on several key domains of social-emotional development and setting individualized goals to work on with each case-managed student throughout the year.
- **Basic needs.** Our supports are as varied as the students we serve and often include counseling, clothing closets and food pantries, helping families locate affordable housing, apply for health insurance, taking a student to a doctor appointment, or helping the family navigate application for unemployment.
- **Attendance.** Many of us have lots of concern about student engagement this year, especially for those who will be in a virtual setting. We will continue working with students to help them navigate school attendance, whether in the building or virtually.



Jazmine's Journey to Eighth Grade Graduation

It was the 2015-16 school year when an incoming fifth grader named Jazmine* was first introduced to CIS-TN. Jazmine had a vibrant personality and enjoyed playing, dancing, and singing with her friends at recess. Being a middle child with eight siblings, she wasn't afraid to speak up for herself or her peers. She refused to be silent, often acting as a bold communicator of injustice when she felt her peers or herself were not being heard.

Having witnessed several violent crimes, the structured environment of school left no space for Jazmine's trauma. She frequently came to school exhausted having only slept two hours the night before due to nightmares and insomnia related to stress and anxiety. Oftentimes, she acted out her frustration by walking out of class, shouting words of defense as she ran down the hallway kicking lockers, and ultimately received multiple suspensions. Unfortunately, her fifth-grade year Jazmine was retained due to excessive absences – many of which were due to suspensions.

[Read more >>>](#)

OUR IMPACT 2019-20

End of year results

During school year 2019-20, CIS-TN served **over 18,000 students** in **41 schools** across **16 counties**. The following results are based on the percentage of case-managed students statewide that made progress toward/achieved their individualized goal(s).



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY PARTNER RESOURCES

[Planning for the Next Normal at School: Keeping students, staff, and families safe and healthy](#)

This guide aims to equip schools with specific, evidence-informed guidance and operating procedures for keeping school communities mentally and physically safe as we shape a new approach to learning.

[Attendance Playbook: Smart Strategies for Reducing Chronic Absence in the Covid Era](#)

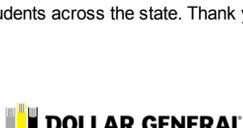
Offers ideas for how to encourage and track attendance during distance learning. And it includes more than two dozen effective and readily scalable approaches to reducing chronic student absenteeism in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak.

[Creating Cultures of Care: Supporting the Whole Child through Trauma-Informed Practice](#)

Shares important insights about trauma-informed practice, drawing from both the prevailing literature and on-the-ground community expertise.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

We are incredibly grateful to our donors who enable us to continue providing critical resources and support to students across the state. Thank you!



SUPPORT OUR WORK

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We know the power that one individual can make in the life of a child – teachers, mentors and hopefully you! When you donate to CIS-TN you're investing in a child's life and your community.

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