



A project of the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS),
in conjunction with the National Association of Social Workers, Tennessee Chapter,
and the Tennessee Department of Children's Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW STATEWIDE WEBSITE HELPS TENNESSEANS HELP THEMSELVES

NASHVILLE, Tn., March 29, 2004—In East Tennessee, a woman needs to find a safe place to stay. In Middle Tennessee, a father needs to find substance abuse help for his addicted child. In West Tennessee, an abused child needs to know where to turn. All of these individuals may now be helped through a new website, www.tennhelp.com, which was unveiled today. The website has a list of over 3,000 social service agencies across the state and offers Tennesseans a user-friendly way to find help for specific needs.

The website was developed by the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS), in conjunction with the National Association of Social Workers, Tennessee Chapter (NASW), and the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS). Work on the website began in the summer of 2003, and the website was officially launched today at the Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, as part of the Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare.

"This site is focused on resources for children and families," said Jim Deming, executive director of TALS. "Many social service agencies and professionals who are at this conference have supported TennHelp and have helped us develop this product. So this seemed a fitting venue to roll out the website."

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The website collected data from across the state—much of it through DCS field staff. The site includes entries from all of Tennessee’s counties, and users are prompted through three simple “mouse clicks” to find the help they need.

According to TALS, it is anticipated that social workers will be heavy users of the website. In addition, the website will be a vital resource for government officials, pastors, counselors, healthcare professionals and teachers who need to find help for someone. Most importantly, however, the website enables the average Tennessean to easily find an organization that can help them.

“Our state has a host of Information and Referral Providers who can assist Tennesseans in need, and our goal is not to duplicate their efforts,” explained Deming. “Instead, we wanted to produce a resource that the average Tennessean could use themselves—especially those who live in rural areas and do not have access to a call-in referral provider.

“At a time when tough economic times means real crisis for Tennessee’s families and the social service agencies that assist them, we think it is crucial to empower individuals to help themselves.”

According to Deming, the website takes on special relevance in light of the recent data showing that 43 percent of Tennessee’s working poor have access to the Internet. That figure was revealed in the Statewide Comprehensive Legal Needs Survey for 2003 that was commissioned by TALS.

Having compiled over 3,000 entries in just six months, the TennHelp website is an example of the power of collaboration between non-profit organizations.

“Our partnership with NASW and DCS has enabled us to pool our resources to develop this resource. In the face of significant cutbacks, all social service agencies are challenged to do more with less. We are proud that this website is an example of how that can be done.”

For more information about TennHelp, contact the TALS office at (615) 627-0956, extension 22. To visit the website, go to www.tennhelp.com.