Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Why Redefining the Federal Poverty Level Puts Kids at Risk in 200 Words

Health Equity

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Earlier this spring, the Trump administration unveiled its proposal to change how the federal poverty level (FPL) is calculated. By using a new inflation index to determine the poverty level, millions of families currently earning below the FPL would no longer be considered to be in poverty, despite no changes in their finances. Today, a family of four earning $26,000 or less a year is considered to be in poverty.

Many federal programs that serve to alleviate the effects of childhood poverty use the FPL to determine eligibility. There's no debate: if the proposed changes to the poverty determination are implemented, millions of children and their families currently receiving critical benefits from programs such as Medicaid, WIC, SNAP, Head Start, and the Low Income Heating Assistance Program would no longer be eligible for these services in the coming years. By cutting off their access to these programs, we would be setting children up to be less healthy and less prepared for school in the future.

Children are more likely than adults to be in poverty, so these changes stand to disproportionately affect the families we serve at PolicyLab. Though the Office of Management and Budget's public comment period concluded, it will be important to continue educating policymakers about the potential impact of the proposed changes. I encourage you to reach out if we can partner together to illustrate how redefining the FPL puts kids at risk.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Strategy & Communications Manager Lauren Walens.

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