Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

SNAP Work Requirements Start September 1. What Does It Mean for Kids in 200 Words?

Family & Community Health

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On September 1, states will start to implement expanded work requirements in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), in accordance with HR 1 passed by Congress in July. These new requirements include caregivers of children 14 and older, and while only adults will be subject to work requirements, this policy will have downstream effects on child health.

SNAP benefits are provided to the household. Under the new policy, when adults do not report working 20-hours per week or complete paperwork to qualify for an exemption, they will only be eligible for SNAP benefits for three months every three years. While other eligible household members can maintain their benefits, the lost food assistance will materially impact household budgets. This new policy puts households with an estimated 800,000 children at risk of losing at least some of their SNAP benefits.

These changes could also affect meal access in school and child care settings, as SNAP participation automatically qualifies children for these nutrition programs.

Participation in SNAP improves food security. Meanwhile, research shows that work reporting requirements do not increase employment. Instead many people, including those who meet the requirements or have valid exemptions, lose benefits because of the administrative processes involved. Children, despite being eligible, may also lose benefits due to confusion about eligibility and cumbersome paperwork. Given the importance of childhood food security for child health, my colleagues and I share a priority of increasing families' access to

SNAP. We remain committed to this goal, but newly expanded work requirements take us in the other direction.

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 Communications Manager Laura Cavello.

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