

Title: Are parents with a child support order more likely to be eligible for both SNAP and subsidized child care?

The child support program (referred to as the IV-D program) is open to any parent or person with custody of a child that needs help establishing paternity, setting a child support or medical support order, or collecting child support payments. Parents not in the IV-D program may benefit from child support services.

This analysis builds on the ASPE publication on child support cooperation requirements to determine the overlap in the populations of custodial and noncustodial parents with and without formal child support orders, that are eligible for both Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and subsidized child care (CCDF).

Why is this important?

Understanding the overlap of these populations has policy implications for integrated eligibility systems and benefits determination, as well as outreach and recruitment to the child support program. The analysis finds dual eligibility rates for SNAP and CCDF are highest among custodial parents, regardless of formal order status.

Families without formal child support orders

An estimated 13.3 million noncustodial and custodial parents do not have formal child support orders – 6.8 million (51%) are custodial and 6.5 million (49%) are noncustodial. About 10 percent of parents without formal support orders are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF. Of parents without formal orders who are eligible for SNAP and CCDF, about 17 percent (or 227,000) participate in both programs. This represents two percent of parents without formal orders. Just over half (51%, 3.5 million) of custodial parents without formal child support orders are eligible for SNAP, CCDF, or both. Of those, one third (1.1 million) are eligible for SNAP and CCDF; that's roughly 17 percent of all custodial parents without formal child support orders. The dual program participation rate among those who are eligible is 17.5 percent (197,000). Less than one-third (32%, 2.1 million) of noncustodial parents without formal child support orders are eligible for SNAP, CCDF, or both. The overwhelming majority are eligible for SNAP only. Only about three percent (186,000) of noncustodial parents without formal orders are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF. The rate of participation in both SNAP and CCDF among eligible noncustodial parents without formal orders is 15.6 percent (29,000).

Seventeen out of every one hundred custodial parents without a formal child support order are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF.

Three out of every one hundred noncustodial parents without a formal child support order are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF.

In the Current Population Survey, for custodial parents, a formal order is defined as having a legal or pending legal order or legal arrangement. For noncustodial parents, a formal order indicates the noncustodial parent is required to pay child support under a legal order or legal arrangement.

States have flexibility to require a person who receives SNAP or CCDF to cooperate with the child support program.

Families with formal child support orders

An estimated 11 million noncustodial and custodial parents have formal child support orders – 5.8 million (53%) are custodial and 5.2 million (47%) are noncustodial. Almost nine percent (946,000) of parents with a formal child support order, both custodial and noncustodial, are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF. Of those, only 17.4 percent (165,000) participate in both programs. This represents one percent of all parents with a formal child support order.

About 46 percent (2.7 million) of custodial parents with formal child support orders are eligible for SNAP, CCDF, or both. Half of them are only eligible for SNAP, but roughly one-third (849,000) are dually eligible for SNAP and CCDF. In other words, about 14 percent of custodial parents with a formal child support order are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF. The dual program participation rate among eligibles is 18 percent (153,000). This represents three percent of all custodial parents with formal child support orders.

Most (79%, 4.1 million) noncustodial parents with formal child support orders are not eligible for SNAP or CCDF. Of the one-fifth who are, most (82%, 903,000) are only eligible for SNAP. However, a very small share (97,000) are dually eligible for SNAP and CCDF; this is roughly two percent of noncustodial parents with a formal child support order. The dual program participation rate in both SNAP and CCDF for this population is quite low – 12.3 percent (12,000 people).

Fourteen out of every one hundred custodial parents with a formal child support order are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF.

Two out of every 100 noncustodial parents with a formal child support order are eligible for both SNAP and CCDF.

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The data used in this brief are based on TRIM3 analysis of the 2016 Current Population Survey Child Support Supplement match file and the 2016 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Data Limitations: the TRIM3 baseline alignment process uses administrative data that does not directly control for custodial or noncustodial parent status, or for the overlap in participation between SNAP and CCDF.

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