How many families might be newly reached by child support cooperation requirements in SNAP and subsidized child care, and what are their characteristics?

Child Support Cooperation Policy

Parents are required to cooperate with the child support enforcement program (often referred to as the IV-D program) as a condition of receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and foster care maintenance payments under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

States have flexibility to require a person who receives other means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), subsidized child care and housing subsidies to cooperate with the child support enforcement program.

There is a great deal of variation in which states have cooperation requirements, and how they are administered and enforced.

Recent policy conversations have identified custodial and noncustodial parents that receive SNAP or child care subsidies and do not have formal child support orders, as potential beneficiaries of child support services.

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.

11.7 million Noncustodial Parents
All noncustodial parents, with or without a formal order

56%
Do not have a formal child support order

12.6 million Custodial Parents
All custodial parents, with or without a formal order

53%
Do not have a formal child support order

Source: The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Child Support and Family Law Legislation Database and the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Policies Database
Poverty: Parents without formal child support orders are more likely to be poor than those parents with formal child support orders.

3.5 million custodial parents are poor.
2.1 million noncustodial parents are poor.

Child support represents over half of the income of the poor families that receive it.

Formal Order
Non Formal Order

Percent Poor

26%
12%
29%
23%

SNAP: 2.8 million custodial parents without a formal order are eligible. Of these individuals, 2.7 million receive benefits.

SNAP: 1.9 million noncustodial parents without a formal order are eligible. Of these individuals, 1.5 million receive benefits.

Subsidized child care: One quarter of custodial parents without formal child support orders are eligible for child care subsidies and 4% receive them.

SNAP Take-up Rate among Custodial Parents Without a Formal Order: 96%