

Child Support Cooperation Requirements in Child Care Subsidy Programs and SNAP: Key Policy Considerations

The child support program collects money from non-custodial parents and distributes that financial support to their children. For some public programs, states must require cooperation with child support as a condition of eligibility. For other public programs, states have the option to require cooperation with child support.

Required for all States:

- TANF provides financial assistance for eligible low-income families with children to help pay for food, shelter, utilities, and other basic needs.
- Medicaid provides health coverage to eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities.

May be Required by State:

- SNAP provides nutrition assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and families through a monthly benefit.
- CCDF* provides financial subsidies to low-income families to access child care so that parents can work or attend job training or educational programs.

There is limited to no research on the impact of cooperation requirements on child support outcomes. For example, we do not know if cooperation requirements increase child support caseloads or child support receipt, nor do we know their impact on family economic well-being or whether they are cost effective. Similarly, there is little evidence on what policy choices lead to more effective implementation, better results, and are more cost effective. This exploratory study examines the current policy landscape and provides context for policy conversations.

Cooperation requirements are much more common in child care programs than SNAP.

- Seventeen states have child care cooperation requirements.
- Six states have SNAP and child care cooperation requirements.
- One state has SNAP cooperation requirements.

Since 2005, relatively few states have chosen to establish cooperation requirements for recipients of CCDF subsidies or SNAP, however, since 2015, seventeen states have introduced at least one bill establishing cooperation requirements for SNAP and seven states introduced at least one bill establishing cooperation requirements for CCDF subsidies.

Implementation Tips

- Determine eligibility before cooperation to reduce staff burden.
- Couple systems upgrades.

- Align good cause exemptions across programs.
- Roll out slowly, such as in pilot counties.

Key Policy Decisions

In general, states have considerable flexibility to design cooperation requirements.

1. Who should be subject to cooperation requirements?
2. Under what circumstances should a person be exempt from cooperation requirements? For example, for safety in cases of intimate partner violence.
3. What should be the consequences of noncooperation?

Considerations for Policy and Practice

- Automated data systems and electronic interfaces. State respondents noted the critical role electronic interfaces between data systems play in transmitting information between programs.
- Lack of real-time data to inform policy and management. Respondents reported that data systems and reports are generally not set up so that states can easily identify, monitor, and assess the impact of the cooperation requirement in real time.
- Alignment of policies and processes. Respondents reported that they generally try to align their procedures for referral, intake, and ongoing case monitoring across assistance programs to coordinate and streamline the assistance application process and the cooperation determination process.

Prepared by Lauren Antelo, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation(ASPE). Based on the issue brief, " Child Support Cooperation Requirements in Child Care Subsidy Programs and SNAP: Key Policy Considerations" by Rebekah Selekman and Pamela Holcomb, Mathematica Policy Research prepared under contract #HHSP233201500035I /HHSP23337027T. The EMPOWERED study, conducted on behalf of ASPE at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, examines the use of performance measures, work requirements, and child support cooperation requirements across human services programs.

* Child care subsidy programs funded under the Child Care Development Fund or CCDF.