

# CLASP

Policy solutions that work for low-income people

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# Maximizing Benefits Access in Pilot States

## Adult Promise Phase II Convening

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# Presentation Overview

- Background about CLASP
- Defining benefits access
- An update on our work with pilot states thus far & themes and challenges we've identified
- Next steps for this work
- Group discussion about incorporating benefits access into state plans

# About CLASP

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) advocates for policy solutions that reduce poverty, promote economic security, and advance racial equity.

Our work areas include: Child Care, Income and Work Supports, Job Quality, Youth, and Postsecondary and Economic Success (CPES)

CPES seeks postsecondary and workforce policy reforms that create pathways to education and employment, specifically for low-income, nontraditional students like adults.

# Quick Review of Benefits Access

Includes programs such as:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- child care subsidies
- tax credits
- housing assistance
- and others.

College students, particularly nontraditional students, have unique financial challenges. Accessing public benefits can mitigate these challenges.

# Role of Public Benefits in Affordability

## Benefits of maximizing access to public income supports

- Reduce unmet need
- Increase financial stability of adults
- Help students care for their families
- Decrease debt levels
- Compliment existing funding streams

## Challenge

- Do public benefits policies support state/institutional completion goals?
- Are states taking the “right” options?
- Are institutions connecting students to benefits?

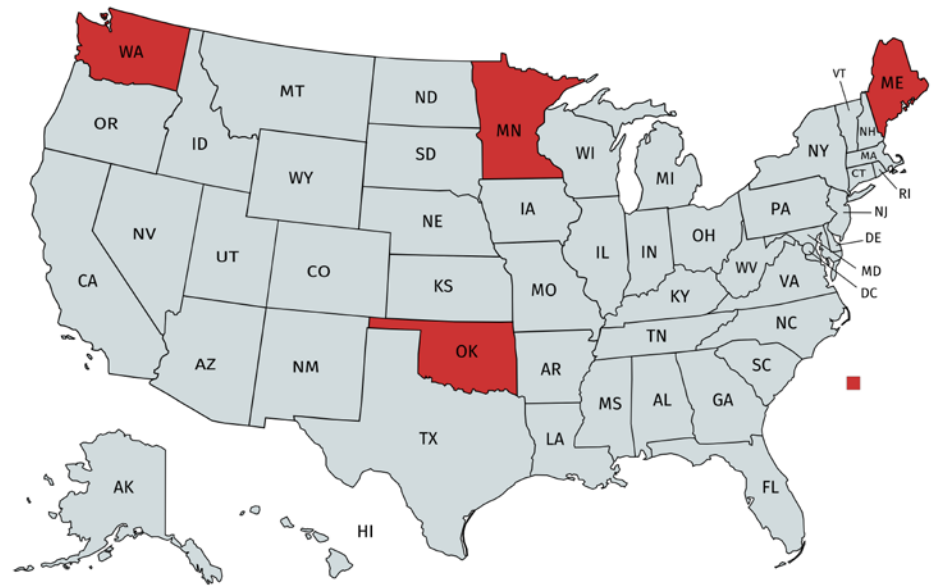
# 5 Components of Benefits Access

- Inform students about the existence of programs
- Help students understand how to apply
- Screen students to determine if they are eligible and assist them to apply
- Assist students to provide needed documentation and understand any barriers to eligibility
- Follow-up with benefits programs/local offices to troubleshoot on behalf of individual students

# CLASP's Work with Pilot States

Since October 2017, we've engaged pilot states in discussions about better aligning state public benefits policies with postsecondary completion goals, and connecting students to public benefits in the context of their adult promise work.

Our discussions culminated in a summary memo that covered details about the state context, potential areas of change, and suggested next steps.



# Public Benefit Policy Scans

ME	<p>Medicaid – expansion approved via referendum in 2017.</p> <p>TANF – Parents as Scholars (PaS) program.</p> <p>SNAP – pending legislation to improve SNAP E&amp;T &amp; PaS programs.</p> <p>Child Care – students eligible for 2 hours of care per credit per week.</p>
MN	<p>Medicaid – expansion state.</p> <p>TANF – up to 24 months of postsecondary can be counted as an eligible work activity if approved as employment-related.</p> <p>SNAP – work hours aren't averaged across a month to determine whether a student will qualify for an eligibility exemption.</p> <p>Child Care – postsecondary an allowable standalone activity for eligibility.</p>



# Public Benefit Policy Scans

OK	<p>Medicaid – non-expansion state.</p> <p>TANF – students are eligible for up to 12 months.</p> <p>SNAP – broad-based categorical eligibility not expanded &amp; gross income limit remains at 130% (1 of 10 states that hasn't raised it).</p> <p>Child Care – postsecondary an allowable standalone activity for eligibility.</p>
WA	<p>Medicaid – expansion state</p> <p>TANF – up to 24 months of postsecondary can be counted as an eligible work activity.</p> <p>SNAP – best practice SNAP E&amp;T program (BFET) that provides wide range of supports for low-income students.</p> <p>Child Care – postsecondary must be combined with 20 hours work/week to qualify &amp; student cannot be enrolled in a transfer program.</p>

# Opportunities & Challenges

**Opportunity:** Public benefits and workforce policies are not well aligned with college completion goals for adults.

**Challenge:** Successfully building connections with new partners and/or engaging them on benefits, or adult promise generally, to open discussions about policy changes.

**Opportunity:** Government officials, both elected and administrative, affect the alignment of public benefits and postsecondary policies, and play a role in the completion agenda.

**Challenge:** Identify opportunities to engage government officials to create stakeholders and reduce barriers.

# Opportunities & Challenges

**Opportunity:** Wide interest in providing institutions tools/resources to assist them with directly connecting students with benefits.

**Challenge:** This work is new to the participating institutions.



# Our Next Steps with this Work

**Maine** – Once sites selected, CLASP hopes to participate in a workshop or webinar for participating institutions about connecting students with benefits.

**Minnesota** – In the coming months we plan to be involved in a discussion about benefits access with the selected institutions and potential policy alignment at the state and county levels. This could include fostering conversations with their programs' community of practice.

# Our Next Steps with this Work

**Oklahoma** – Tentatively plan to visit the state in February to present at a 2-day adult promise planning meeting attended by a wide variety of partners, including those from state social services and workforce agencies.

**Washington** — With the state team, working to identify policies to align and potentially participate in a meeting of state officials from various agencies to help others understand the importance of policy alignment for adult college completion.

*For this work to continue to advance, postsecondary officials need to include non-postsecondary agency officials to the table for discussions.*

# Questions So Far?



# Group Discussion: Incorporating Benefits Access into Your State Promise Program

Based on discussions with CLASP and/or your team, what ideas do you have about how to talk about public benefits policies and access activities within your higher education agency? With institutions?

Have you engaged in conversations with other agencies about aligning public benefits policies with adult promise goals?

As larger conversations with other agency partners take place, how do you plan to talk about benefits access and increased policy alignment?

- What do you think are the most important points to make?
- What supports do you need to make the case?