

# Maximizing Access to Other Financial Supports: Child Care, SNAP and other Public Benefits

SHEEO Adult Promise Meeting

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# The Center for Law & Social Policy

- We are a small, nonpartisan, nonprofit policy organization based in DC that advocates for smart policy solutions to help individuals get out of poverty, find employment, and become self-sufficient
- We work in five overarching areas: postsecondary education and workforce development, child care & early childhood education, youth policy, income and work supports, and job quality
- The postsecondary work at CLASP focuses specifically on low-income, nontraditional students, such as adults

# How Did We Get Here?

- Concern about student unmet need, particularly among adult students
- Surveys show financial pressures impact completion
- Increasing awareness of student food and housing insecurity
- Even if tuition is free, students still have living expenses
- CLASP began advocating for low-income student access to public benefits & that the alignment of anti-poverty and higher education policies could serve completion goals
- Momentum at federal agency level:
  - November 2016 joint agency letter: “Aligning Federal Supports and Program Delivery for College Access and Completion”

# Role of public benefits & tax credits

- 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 our public benefits and tax credit policies support our state completion goals?
  - Are states taking the “right” options?

# What are public benefits?

Child Care Subsidies

TANF

WIC

Child Support

Medicaid

EITC

WIOA

Housing Vouchers

CHIP

SNAP (Food Stamps)

SSI

Veterans Benefits

Unemployment  
Insurance

# Policy Alignment Challenges

- Administration of public benefits programs spread across federal departments and levels of government
- Split decision making among levels is common across a range of programs
- At the state level, administration can be centralized or divided among agencies
  - Oklahoma: Three agencies involved in administering SNAP, Medicaid, child care, WIC, and TANF
  - Maine: The same programs are administered by one agency
- In some states, like Minnesota, administration for some human service programs happens at the county level

	Federal Level	State Level	Local or Institutional Level
<b>Student Aid</b>			
Pell Grants	Full		
SEOG	Majority		Partial
Federal Work Study	Majority		Partial
Stafford Loans	Full		
State Grant Aid		Majority	Partial
State Work Study		Majority	Partial
Institutional Aid/Work Study			Full
<b>Public Benefits</b>			
SNAP	Majority	Partial	
TANF	Partial	Majority	
Child Care	Partial	Majority	
Medicaid	Partial	Partial	
CHIP	Partial	Majority	
Advance Premium Tax Credit	Full		
Housing Subsidies	Majority		Partial
UI		Full	
<b>Tax Credits</b>			
AOTC	Full		
EITC	Full		
CTC	Full		

Institutional financial aid offices have authority to allocate limited funding among eligible students

Examples of state discretion: states approve programs that increase employability; state can average work hours across a month

States have flexibility in whether postsecondary is an eligible expense

For the most part, TANF is a block grant to states; however, there are federal limitations such as the type and length of education that will count toward federal work requirements

Public Housing Authorities have some discretion regarding who is eligible for housing

# College as a Supported Activity

- Many programs tie eligibility for those pursuing postsecondary to part- or full-time employment
  - SNAP
    - If enrolled more than half time must meet exceptions
  - Subsidized Child Care
    - In some states, postsecondary is not an allowable standalone activity for child care eligibility—must combine education with work
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
    - Most states limit standalone education and training to one year



# SNAP (Food Stamps)

- Available to low-income households
- Provides monthly allotment via EBT to buy groceries
- Maximum monthly amount is \$194 for a household of 1, \$357 for a household of 2
- False perception that it is not available to students



# Students Can Receive SNAP

- Students are eligible if they meet income, asset criteria and any of the following apply:
  - Caring for a child under age 6;
  - Single parent caring for a child 6-11 and enrolled full-time, or unable to obtain child care;
  - Working for pay at least 20 hours per week;
  - Receiving any work-study funds;
  - Receiving TANF benefits;
  - Unable to work because of disability; OR
  - Enrolled in certain programs aimed at employment (WIOA, TAA, SNAP E&T or other state or locally-funded training program).

# SNAP State Policy Options

- Use flexibility in deeming career-oriented postsecondary programs as equivalent to SNAP E&T programs and thus allowable
- Exclude state-funded work-study as income for SNAP
- Encourage institutions to inform all students who are eligible for or receiving Federal Work-Study funds of potential SNAP eligibility
- Take the option to average hours of work across a month to reduce churning

# Subsidized Health Insurance

- Low-income children and pregnant women are highly likely to be eligible under either Medicaid or CHIP, and probably are already enrolled.
- Under the ACA, low income adults under 138% of FPL are eligible for Medicaid in states that have expanded.
- ACA purchase of marketplace subsidies starts at 100% of FPL.
- Young adults (under 26) can be covered by their parents' health insurance.

# Family Programs

## Programs specifically for families with children

- Child care
- TANF
- WIC



# Child Care Subsidies

- Center-based child care is more expensive than tuition at most public colleges
- Low-income college students may be eligible for child care subsidies
  - Postsecondary allowable activity in 42 states and DC
  - But, may require work as well, be limited to certain types of courses
  - Study time may be allowed
  - Only about 1 in 7 eligible children are served
  - Waiting list or capped enrollment in most states

# Child Care State Policy Options

- Allow students in postsecondary to receive child care subsidies to cover their studies and not require students to meet additional work requirements
- Allow both parents to pursue postsecondary education and training and still qualify for subsidies
- Consider allocating more money to support student parents, either through their main subsidy program or through special programs, like the Minnesota Postsecondary Child Care Grant

# Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Provides ongoing cash assistance to very low-income parents, but benefits are low
  - Benefit amount varies by state, but is very low—less than 50% of the FPL in every state
- States limit eligibility, but it is a gateway to child care subsidies and other public benefits like Medicaid
- The federal law limits education and training is limited to one year, but some states have expanded to 24-36 months
- Some states support postsecondary attendance through robust programs, such as Maine's Parents as Scholars



# Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program

- Serves pregnant, post-partum and breastfeeding women, and children up to age 5
- Provides infant cereal, iron-fortified adult cereal, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, peanut butter, dried and canned beans/peas, and canned fish
- States set eligibility limits, but must be between 100% and 185% of poverty level
- Must be individually determined to be at “nutrition risk” by a health professional

# Rental Housing Assistance

- Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8) provides vouchers to subsidize rent in private apartments and dwellings
- Public housing is also available through local Public Housing Authorities (PHA)—each PHA has the discretion to establish preferences
  - Do you major Public Housing Authorities treat full-time students similarly to working families, encouraging greater eligibility for public housing

# Other Resources to Support Education and Training

- Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA)
  - Can support training costs, as well as support services like child care, transportation and supplies
  - Greater emphasis on longer-term training with new law
  - Preference for low-income individuals
- Some states have their own training funds
  - Often not strategically targeted
- These training dollars can support non-credit coursework

# Low-Income Parents

- Eligible for wide range of programs
  - Some programs are limited to families with children
  - Others are open to childless adults, but are more generous or have fewer restrictions for parents
- Few receive all programs they are eligible for:
  - Some programs have capped funding
  - Eligible individuals may not know about programs, or may be deterred by the burden of establishing and maintaining eligibility

# Low-Income Parents

## Likely to receive (> 80%)

- Health insurance for kids
- Earned Income Tax Credit

## Probably receive (50-80%)

- Health insurance for parents
- SNAP (Food Stamps) and WIC

## Might receive (<50%)

- TANF, child care subsidies, housing subsidies



# Low-Income Childless Adults (no disability)

## Probably receive (50-80%)

- EITC
  - Only eligible if aged 25-64
  - max of \$496 per year
- SNAP (Food Stamps)



## Might receive (<50%)

- Housing subsidies
- Public health insurance (especially since Medicaid expansion)

# Why Don't More Students Access Benefits?

- Lack of information, misinformation about eligibility
- Applying is often time consuming, frustrating
- Stigma and other social/cultural barriers
- Yet, an increasing number of colleges are helping connect students to benefits

