

POVERTY & FAMILY SUPPORTS

ISSUE BRIEF

Cutting Programs for Low-Income People Especially Hurts Women and Their Families

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As Congress debates spending priorities and tax policies, it must protect programs for low-income families and individuals and ensure that its actions do not increase poverty.

This principle is particularly important to women, who are more likely than men to be poor at all stages of their lives due to ongoing employment discrimination, overrepresentation in low-wage jobs, and greater responsibilities for unpaid caregiving. As a result, women and their families disproportionately rely on federal programs to protect their health, obtain quality child care and higher education, and help them meet their basic needs during difficult times and as they age.

Census data show that more than four years into the recovery from the Great Recession, poverty remains high—especially among women and children. Income inequality is at record levels, with gains highly concentrated at the top of the income distribution. Yet since FY 2010 funding has decreased for more than 135 programs that serve low-income and vulnerable people,¹ while tax loopholes benefiting the wealthiest Americans and corporations have been left untouched.

A fair federal budget must include increased revenues from those with the greatest ability to pay and invest in programs like those listed below to protect the most vulnerable today and expand opportunity for a stronger shared future.

Women who head families and elderly women are especially reliant on programs for low-income people.

Many low-income assistance programs are designed to improve the lives of poor children—and nearly six in ten poor children lived in single-mother families in 2013. Four in ten single-mother families, and nearly one in two black and Latina single-mother families, were poor. Nearly nine in ten poor single-parent families were headed by women.

Women were over two-thirds of the elderly poor, and more than one in nine women 65 and older was poor in 2013. Elderly women of color and elderly women who live alone are particularly vulnerable: in 2013, about one in five black elderly women, elderly Latinas, and elderly women living alone were poor.

Source: National Women's Law Center, *Insecure & Unequal: Poverty Among Women and Families 2000-2013 (2014)*.²



Protecting Women's Health

Medicaid

Medicaid is a joint federal-state program that provides health coverage for low-income people and plays a critical role in providing health coverage for women of all ages and needs. It covers a comprehensive array of services including prenatal care, well-child visits, preventive services like mammograms and pap smears, and long-term care services including nursing home coverage. Over 22 million women get their health coverage from Medicaid,³ and more than two-thirds of adult Medicaid recipients are women.⁴ In 2014, an estimated 29 million children received health coverage through Medicaid.⁵

Title X Family Planning Program

The **Title X family planning** program provides comprehensive family planning and related preventive health services to low-income women. In 2013, the program served nearly 4.6 million people, 92 percent of whom were women.⁶

Maternal and Child Health Block Grant

The **Maternal and Child Health Block Grant** provides funds for health issues ranging from women's health to newborn screenings to immunizations so children can attend school. The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant provided prenatal care for over 2.3 million women and primary and preventive care services for more than 34 million children, including many with special needs, in FY 2013.⁷



Providing Supports for Children

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

The **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** program helps low-income working families afford child care and supports activities that improve the quality of care for all families. CCDBG served a monthly average of more than 874,000 families with nearly 1.5 million children in FY 2013.⁸

Head Start and Early Head Start

The **Head Start** program provides grants to public and private agencies to provide child development services to low-income children and families. The program helps preschool-age children build their reading and arithmetic skills to prepare for school. The Head Start preschool program served more than 932,000 young children in 2013.⁹ Nearly six in ten families served by the program were headed by a single parent.¹⁰

The **Early Head Start** program provides child and family development services to low-income pregnant women and families with children under age three. The program served 150,100 children under three and nearly 15,500 pregnant women nationwide in 2013.¹¹ Nearly six in ten families served by the program were headed by a single parent.¹²

Child Support Enforcement

The **Child Support Enforcement** program helps families obtain financial and medical support from a parent living outside the home. It served 16.9 million children in FY 2013¹³—nearly one in four.¹⁴ Child support is an important anti-poverty program, although eligibility for services does not depend on income. It lifted nearly 1 million people from poverty in 2013.¹⁵ For poor custodial families who receive child support, it provides half of their total income, on average.¹⁶ In 2011, nearly 7.1 million custodial parents, 89 percent of whom were women, had child support awards.¹⁷ Of the custodial parents living below the federal poverty level, 94 percent were women.¹⁸



Improving Nutrition

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Stamps

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Stamps** helps millions of families put food on the table. SNAP served 46.5 million people in 22.7 million households on average each month in FY 2014.¹⁹ In FY 2013, women were about 61 percent of nonelderly adult recipients and 64 percent of elderly adult recipients.²⁰ Additionally, more than half (57 percent) of all SNAP households with children were headed by a single adult, 92 percent of whom were women.²¹

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program

The **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** program provides grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five. WIC provided nutritious food to more than 8.2 million low-income pregnant women, new mothers, and young children on average each month in FY 2014.²² The program served more than 806,000 pregnant women; more than 590,000 breastfeeding women; more than 575,000 postpartum women; and almost 2 million infants and more than 4.3 million children on average each month in FY 2014.²³

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** provides nutritious food to low-income elderly adults, breastfeeding mothers, and infants. It served an average of 573,700 low-income elderly people each month in FY 2014. CSFP also provided food and formula to an average of 10,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children each month.²⁴

National School Meals Programs

The national school meals programs are federally assisted meals programs that exist in more than 100,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care facilities.²⁵ The **National School Lunch Program** provided nutritious lunches to 30.3 million children each school day in FY 2014, nearly 72 percent of which were served as free or reduced-price meals.²⁶ The **School Breakfast Program** served breakfast to more than 13.5 million children each school day in FY 2014, about 85 percent of which were served as free or reduced-price meals.²⁷ Roughly two-thirds (66 percent) of single-mother families, or nearly 6.5 million single-mother families, were eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals in 2013.²⁸

Child and Adult Care Food Program

The **Child and Adult Care Food Program** provided nutritious meals and snacks to more than 3.4 million children in day care, Head Start, or outside-school-hours care centers as well as 118,000 adults in adult day care facilities in 2012.²⁹ In FY 2014, the program served

almost 2.0 billion meals, 96 percent of which were served in day care homes and child care centers.³⁰ Free and reduced-price meals accounted for nearly 82 percent of all meals served.³¹



Strengthening Income and Work Supports

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

The **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** program is a block grant to states to fund cash assistance, work supports, and other services for low-income children and parents. In FY 2014, nearly 1.6 million families³² and more than 2.8 million children received TANF assistance.³³ In FY 2012 nearly nine in ten (86 percent) adults served by TANF were women.³⁴

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

Unemployment insurance (UI) benefits provide temporary income support to jobless workers who have lost employment through no fault of their own and meet other state requirements. During periods of high unemployment, the federal government funds additional weeks of emergency unemployment benefits to supplement state UI benefits for long-term unemployed workers—although Congress failed to renew the federal UI program in 2014, despite persistently high rates of long-term unemployment. Nationwide, federal and state UI benefits kept 1.2 million people out of poverty in 2013, including more than 358,000 children and nearly 427,000 women.³⁵

Social Security

Social Security is a social insurance program that protects workers and their families when income is lost due to retirement, disability, or death. It covers nearly all workers and their families, not just those with low income, but is the nation's most successful anti-poverty program. Social Security is especially important to women's economic security: for nearly three in ten female beneficiaries 65 and older (30 percent), Social Security is virtually the only source of income.³⁶ The average Social Security benefit for women 65 and older is modest—about \$13,500 per year in 2013³⁷—but without Social Security, nearly half of women 65 and older would have been poor in 2013.³⁸

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides income support for low-income individuals who are elderly or living with disabilities. In 2013, SSI served nearly 8.4 million people, including more than 1.3 million children.³⁹ The majority of adults in the program in 2013 were women—nearly six in ten—and over two-thirds of elderly SSI beneficiaries were women.⁴⁰



Expanding Educational Opportunities

Pell Grants

The **Federal Pell Grant Program** provides grants to help low-income students pursue post-secondary education. Nearly 8.4 million students are expected to receive Pell Grants in the 2016–17 academic year.⁴¹ In the 2011–12 academic year, 62 percent of Pell Grant undergraduate recipients were women.⁴²

Perkins Career and Technical Education Grants

The **Perkins Act** provides funds to states to support career and technical education programs at both the secondary and post-secondary level. Programs funded by Perkins focus on preparing students for high-wage, high-skill careers in current and emerging employment sectors. At the secondary level, nearly half (47 percent) of enrollees were women in the 2009–10 academic year. At the post-secondary level, 55 percent were women in the 2009–10 academic year.⁴³



Making Housing More Affordable

Rental Assistance

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided rental assistance to more than 5.5 million families in FY 2015 through various programs.⁴⁴ Section 8 Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA, also known as the Housing Choice Voucher program) provides core rental assistance to about 2.2 million vulnerable families.⁴⁵ In 2014, nearly half of households served by Section 8 TBRA were families with children.⁴⁶ Low-income elderly people and people with disabilities also receive housing assistance from dedicated HUD programs.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** helps low-income households meet their energy needs. In FY 2012, an estimated 6.6 million families received LIHEAP heating assistance.⁴⁷ Survey data indicate that in FY 2011, nearly all (89 percent) of the households that received LIHEAP assistance had at least one vulnerable household member (someone who was elderly, a child, or a person with disabilities).⁴⁸

1 Coalition on Human Needs, Selected Human Needs Programs: Shrinking Funding Since 2010 (Jan. 2015), available at <http://www.chn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Shrinking-Funding-Since-2010-Approps-FY10-FY15-1.30.15.pdf>. Calculation of program funding levels is adjusted for inflation.

2 NWLC, Insecure & Unequal: Poverty Among Women and Families, 2000-2013 (Sept. 2014), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/insecure-unequal-poverty-and-income-among-women-and-families-2000-2013>.

3 Kaiser Family Found., Medicaid's Role for Women Across the Lifespan: Current Issues and the Impact of the Affordable Care Act, at 1 (Dec. 2012), available at <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/upload/7213-04.pdf>.

4 *Id.*

5 Dep't of Health & Human Servs., FY 2016 Budget in Brief, at 87 (Feb. 2015), available at <http://www.hhs.gov/budget/fy2016/fy-2016-budget-in-brief.pdf>.

6 C.I. Fowler, et al., RTI International, Family Planning Annual Report: 2013 National Summary (Nov. 2014), available at <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/pdfs/fpar-2013-national-summary.pdf> (Exhibit 4).

7 Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Health Resources & Servs. Admin., Maternal and Child Health, Title V Information System, <https://mchdata.hrsa.gov/TVISReports/ProgramData/NumIndiServe.aspx> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015). The figure includes all jurisdictions and infants, children one to 22, and children with special needs.

8 Dep't of Health & Human Services, Admin. for Children & Families, Office of Child Care, FY 2013 CCDF Data Tables (Preliminary), <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/fy-2013-ccdf-data-tables-preliminary> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015) (Table 1: Child Care and Development Fund Preliminary Estimates, Average Monthly Adjusted Number of Families and Children Served (FY 2013)).

9 Christina Walker, Ctr. for Law & Social Policy, Head Start Participants, Programs, Families and Staff in 2013 (Aug. 2014), available at <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/HSpreschool-PIR-2013-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

10 *Id.*

11 Christina Walker, Ctr. for Law & Social Policy, Early Head Start Participants, Programs, Families and Staff in 2013 (Aug. 2014), available at <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/EHSpreschool-PIR-2013-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

12 *Id.*

13 Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Child Support Enforcement FY 2013 Preliminary Report at P-93 (Apr. 2014), <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/fy2013-preliminary-report> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015).

14 NWLC calculations based on Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2014 Annual Social and Economic Supplement Table Creator, <http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html> [hereinafter CPS 2014 Table Creator](last visited Oct. 29, 2014).

15 *Id.* Child support lifted more than 955,000 people out of poverty in 2013.

16 Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Custodial Parents Living in Poverty (Jan. 2014), available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/programs/css/sbtn_custodial_parents_living_in_poverty.pdf.

17 NWLC calculations based on Census Bureau, Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Children: 2011, available at <http://www.census.gov/people/childsupport/data/files/chlds11.pdf> (Table 4: Child Support Payments Agreed to or Awarded Custodial Parents by Selected Characteristics and Sex: 2011).

18 *Id.* Population includes those for whom child support awards were agreed to or awarded.

19 Dep't of Agriculture, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Monthly Data – National Level, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/34SNAPmonthly.htm> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015).

20 Kelsey Farson Gray, Mathematica Policy Research, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2013, at xviii (Dec. 2014), available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2013.pdf>.

21 *Id.* at 50 (Table A.14: Distribution of Participating Households, Individuals, and Benefits by Household).

22 Dep't of Agriculture, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Monthly Data – National Level, http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/37WIC_Monthly.htm (last visited Feb. 4, 2015).

23 Dep't of Agriculture, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Monthly Data – Agency Level, Participation and Program Costs by Category per person, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wicmain.htm> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015).

24 Dep't of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, Participation in the Indian Reservation and Commodity Supplemental Food Programs, and Meals Served in the Nutrition Services Incentive Program, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/fdpart.htm> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015). FY 2014 data are preliminary.

25 Dep't of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet (Sept. 2013), available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>.

26 Dep't of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, National School Lunch Program: Participation and Lunches Served, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/slsummar.htm> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015). FY 2014 data are preliminary.

27 Dep't of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, School Breakfast Program: Participation and Meals Served, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/sbsummar.htm> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015). FY 2014 data are preliminary.

28 NWLC calculations based on CPS 2014 Table Creator, *supra* note 14 (last visited Oct. 29, 2014). Income eligibility is 130 percent of poverty for free lunches and 185 percent of poverty for reduced-price lunches (see Income Eligibility Guidelines, available at

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/notices/iegs/IEGs.htm>). NWLC calculations to determine eligibility of single mother families use poverty thresholds and not the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines, so are not exact matches to the number of eligible families, but are close approximations.

29 Food Research & Action Ctr., Child and Adult Care Food Program, <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/child-and-adult-care-program/> (last visited Oct. 29, 2014).

30 NWLC calculations based on Dep't of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, Child and Adult Care Food Program, http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/33cc_monthly.htm (last visited Feb. 4, 2015). FY 2014 data are preliminary.

31 *Id.*

32 Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Office of Family Assistance, Caseload Data 2014, TANF: Total Number of Families, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource/caseload-data-2014> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015).

33 Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Office of Family Assistance, Caseload Data 2014, TANF: Total Number of Child Recipients, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource/caseload-data-2014> (last visited Feb. 4, 2015).

34 Dep't of Health and Human Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Office of Family Assistance, Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients, Fiscal Year 2012, Tables 18 and 20 (July 2014), available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/tanf_characteristics_fy_2012.pdf.

35 NWLC calculations based on CPS 2014 Table Creator, *supra* note 14 (last visited Oct. 29, 2014).

36 NWLC, Women and Social Security (Apr. 2014), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/women-and-social-security>.

37 The average monthly benefit for all female beneficiaries 65 and older was \$1,122.20, or \$13,466.40 per year as of December 2013. NWLC calculations based on U.S. Social Security Administration, Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin, 2014 (Feb. 2014),

<http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2014/5a.html> (last visited Oct. 30, 2014) (Table 5.A16: Number and average monthly benefit for adult beneficiaries, by sex, type of benefit, and age, December 2013).

38 In 2013, 46.7 percent of women 65 and older would have been poor without Social Security. NWLC calculations based on CPS 2014 Table Creator, *supra* note 14 (last visited Oct. 29, 2014).

39 Social Security Admin., SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2013 (Jul. 2014), Federally Administered Payments, at 21, available at http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_asr/2013/sect02.pdf (Table 4: Recipients, by age, December 1974-2013).

40 NWLC calculations based on *id.* at 22 (Table 5: By type of payment, sex, eligibility category, and age, December 2013). Among adult beneficiaries 57.2 percent are women; among adults 65 and older, 66.9 percent are women.

41 U.S. Dep't of Ed., FY 2016 Budget: Summary and Background Information, at 45 (Feb. 2015), available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget16/summary/16summary.pdf>.

42 U.S. Dep't of Ed., Nat'l Ctr. for Ed. Statistics (NCES), 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12). Computation by NCES QuickStats on March 5, 2014, available at <http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/quickstats/default.aspx>.

43 NWLC calculations based on unpublished Department of Education data.

44 Dep't of Housing & Urban Dev., FY 2016 Congressional Budget Justifications, at 34-2 (Feb. 2015), available at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=FY16-CJE-EntireFile.pdf>.

45 Dep't of Housing & Urban Dev., FY 2016 Congressional Budget Justifications, Public and Indian Housing: Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, at 6-3 (Feb. 2015), available at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=9-FY16CJ-Tenant-BasedRA.pdf>.

46 *Id.* at 6-12.

47 Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, FY 2016 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, at 37, (Feb. 2015), available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/olab/2016_acf_cj_final_for_print_1_28_upted.pdf.

48 Nat'l Energy Assistance Directors' Ass'n, 2011 National Energy Assistance Survey Summary Report, at 12 (Oct. 2011), available at <http://www.appriseinc.org/reports/Final%20NEADA%202011%20Report.pdf>.