

POVERTY & FAMILY SUPPORTS

REPORT

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

November 2013

Katherine Gallagher Robbins and Julie Vogtman

As Congress debates spending priorities and deficit reduction measures, ***it must protect programs for low-income families and individuals and ensure that deficit reduction does not increase poverty.***

This principle has been honored consistently in the major bipartisan deficit reduction packages of recent decades. It is particularly important to women, who are more likely than men to be poor at all stages of their lives because of ongoing employment discrimination 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.

Women and their families should not bear the brunt of deficit reduction. Increased revenues from those with the greatest ability to pay must be a major part of any deficit reduction plan. Maintaining and strengthening programs like those listed below protects the most vulnerable today and expands opportunity for a stronger shared future.



Protecting Women's Health Medicaid

Medicaid provides health care coverage to low-income individuals who are elderly and live with disabilities, as well as low-income children, parents, and pregnant women. It covers a comprehensive array of services including prenatal care, well-child visits, preventive

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 more than half of all poor children live in single-mother families. More than four in ten single-mother families, and nearly one in two black and Latina single-mother families, were poor in 2012. More than four in five poor single-parent families were headed by women.

Women are over two-thirds of the elderly poor, and more than one in ten women 65 and older was poor in 2012. Elderly women of color and elderly women who live alone are particularly vulnerable: in 2012, more than one in five black and Latina elderly women were poor and more than one in six elderly women living alone were poor.¹

services like mammograms and pap smears, and long-term care services including nursing home coverage. In 2011, about seven in ten elderly individuals who relied on Medicaid for assistance were women, and about six in ten non-elderly adult recipients – mostly pregnant women and low-income parents – were women.² More than 36 million children received health coverage through Medicaid in 2012.³

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 2011, the program served over five million people, 92 percent of whom were women.⁴

Maternal and Child Health Block Grant

The **Maternal and Child Health Block Grant** provided prenatal care for over 2.3 million women and primary and preventive care services for nearly 36 million children, including many with special needs, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012.⁵ 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.



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 969,000 families with over 1.6 million children in FY 2011.⁶ Eighty-six percent of the families served by CCDBG in 2007 (the most recent year for which data are available) were single-parent households.⁷

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 946,000 young children in 2012.⁸ Nearly six in ten families served by the program were headed by a single parent.⁹

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 more than 151,000 children under three and nearly 16,200 pregnant women nationwide in 2012.¹⁰ Nearly six in ten families served by the program were headed by a single parent.¹¹

Child Support Enforcement

The **Child Support Enforcement** program helps families obtain financial and medical support from a parent living outside the home. It served almost 17.2 million children in FY 2012¹² (nearly one in four children in the U.S.¹³). 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 2012.¹⁴ For poor custodial families who receive child support it provides, on average, 40 percent of their total income.¹⁵ In 2011, nearly 7.1 million custodial parents, 89 percent of whom were women, had child support awards.¹⁶ Of the custodial parents living below the federal poverty level, 94 percent were women.¹⁷



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 46.6 million people in 22.3 million households on average each month in FY 2012.¹⁸ In FY 2011, women were 62 percent of non-elderly adult recipients and 66 percent of elderly adult recipients.¹⁹ Additionally, more than half (56 percent) of all SNAP households with children were headed by a single adult, 93 percent of whom were women.²⁰

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

The **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** program provides grants to states for supplemental food, 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 8.9 million low-income pregnant women, new mothers, and young children on average each month in FY 2012.²¹ The program served almost 890,000 pregnant women; more than 588,000

breastfeeding women; almost 616,000 postpartum women; and nearly 2.1 million infants and over 4.7 million children on average each month in FY 2012.²²

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 576,600 low-income elderly people each month in FY 2012. CSFP also provided food and formula to an average of 17,600 pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children each month.²³

National School Meals Programs

The national school meals programs are federally assisted meal programs that exist in more than 100,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care facilities.²⁴ The **National School Lunch Program** provided nutritious lunches to 31.6 million children each school day in FY 2012, two-thirds of which were served as free or reduced-price meals.²⁵ The **School Breakfast Program** served breakfast to nearly 12.9 million children each school day in FY 2012, about 84 percent of which were served as free or reduced-price meals.²⁶ Roughly two-thirds (66 percent) of single-mother families, or over 6.6 million single-mother families, were eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals in 2012.²⁷

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 2012.²⁸ In FY 2012, the program served more than 1.9 billion meals, most of which were served in day care homes and child care centers.²⁹ Free and reduced-price meals accounted for nearly 82 percent of all meals served.³⁰



Maintaining 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 2012, over 1.75 million families³¹ and over 3.1 million children received TANF assistance.³² In FY 2011, more than eight in ten (85 percent) adults served by TANF were women.³³

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 benefits to supplement state UI benefits. Nationwide, federal and state UI benefits kept 1.7 million people out of poverty in 2012, including 446,000 children and 655,000 women.³⁴

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 incomes, 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 (29 percent), Social Security is virtually the only source of income.³⁵ The average Social Security benefit for women 65 and older is modest – about \$13,100 per year in 2012³⁶ – but without Social Security, nearly half of women 65 and older would have been poor in 2012.³⁷

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides income support for low-income individuals who are elderly or living with disabilities. In 2012, SSI served nearly 8.3 million people, including more than 1.3 million children.³⁸ The majority of adults in the program in 2012 were women – nearly six in ten – and over two-thirds of elderly SSI beneficiaries were women.³⁹



Expanding Educational Opportunities

Pell Grants

The **Federal Pell Grant Program** provides grants to help low-income students pursue post-secondary education. In the 2007-2008 academic year, the latest academic year for which data are available, two-thirds (66 percent) of Pell Grant recipients were women.⁴⁰ The program made nearly 9.0 million student aid awards in 2012.⁴¹

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 2009-2010 academic year. At the post-secondary level, 55 percent were women in the 2009-2010 academic year.⁴²



Making Housing More Affordable

Rental Assistance

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided rental assistance to more than 5.4 million families in FY 2012 through various programs.⁴³ **Section 8 Tenant-Based Rental Assistance** (TBRA, also known as the Housing Choice Voucher program) provided core rental assistance to about 2.2 million vulnerable families in 2012.⁴⁴ In 2012, 81 percent of households served by Section 8 TBRA were headed by women and half of households served were families with children.⁴⁵ 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 2011, an estimated 8.9 million families received LIHEAP assistance.⁴⁶ Survey data indicate that in FY 2011, nearly all (89 percent) of households that received LIHEAP assistance had at least one vulnerable household member (someone who was elderly, a child or a person with disabilities).⁴⁷

Technical note: Some data in this fact sheet are preliminary and may be updated after publication.

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