Policy Considerations for Child SSI Program

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“Families with children with disabilities have real needs for additional income - but perhaps that money should be linked to meeting the specific needs of the child’s disability and, where possible, to supporting that child’s transition to productive adult life.”

Dr. James Perrin, (Boston Globe)

Overview of Today’s Presentation

- Individual characteristics and outcomes
- SSI program trends
- Policy options
Individual Characteristics and Outcomes
Implications of Eligibility Requirements

• Eligibility
  – Limited incomes and assets
  – Marked and severe functional limitations
  – Few continuing disability reviews (CDR)
  – Age 18 redetermination
    • Redetermined under adult criteria

• Implications
  – Program focus on youth’s disability
  – Targets low-income families
  – Potential adverse incentives for parents to invest in human capital development
Characteristics of Child SSI Recipients

Sources: Except for single parent, characteristics from 2010 child SSI recipients reported in Stegman-Bailey and Hemmeter 2014; Single parent data from 2001 child SSI recipients reported in Davies et al. 2009
SSI’s Important Contribution to Family Income

- SSI represents half the income for the family (Davies et al. 2009)

- 340,000 additional youth would live in poverty without SSI benefit added to family income (Stegman-Bailey and Hemmeter 2014)
Poor outcomes reflect multiple factors

- Fragmented system of supports
- Severe health conditions
- SSI disincentives

Source: Wittenburg (2011)
Major Shift in Supports to Low-Income Families

Number of Child SSI and Child AFDC/TANF Recipients Per Thousand

Year (December)

Source: Calculations based SSA and TANF administrative data from ASPE-HHS, Crouse (2013)
Child SSI Recipients to Children by State, 2001

National SSI caseload = 881,851
National Ratio = 12 per 1,000 children

Source: Calculations based SSA and TANF administrative data from ASPE-HHS, Crouse (2013)
Child SSI Recipients to Children by State, 2006

National SSI caseload = 1,078,977
National Ratio = 15 per 1,000 children

Source: Calculations based SSA and TANF administrative data from ASPE-HHS, Crouse (2013)
Child SSI Recipients to Children by State, 2011

National SSI caseload = 1,277,122
National Ratio = 18 per 1,000 children

Source: Calculations based SSA and TANF administrative data from ASPE-HHS, Crouse (2013)
Policy Considerations
Considerations in Developing Policy Options

• Heterogeneity of youth and family needs
  – Balance poverty reduction goals and long-term human capital of youth

• SSI role in the safety net varies substantially by state

• Lessons learned from demonstrations
  – Customization of interventions to outcomes (e.g., job development)
  – Identifying well defined target populations
Potential Directions: SSI Policy Options

• Test options that focus on youth outcomes
  – Strengthen work incentives
    • Interventions: Youth Transition Demonstration and PROMISE
    • Incentives: enhancing return to work
  – Test alternative benefit paths based on youth’s needs
    • Recognize that youth’s needs change from adolescence to adulthood
      – One example: WID’s Career Building Access Pilots for Youth
      – Several other options
Potential Directions: State options

• State options to integrate SSI with other programs
  – Recognize that SSI is part of broader safety net
  – Focus cash benefit options to meet low-income family’s need’s
  – Integrate other supports (e.g., education) so that youth can achieve long-term goals

• Important caveat
  • State capacities to provide services differs substantially
    – States should test and demonstrate capabilities
    – E.g. SSI might be stronger than current state options
References


Stegman, Michelle and Jeffrey Hemmeter. “Characteristics of Noninstitutionalized DI and SSI Program Participants, 2010 Update.” Research and Statistics Note, 2014,
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Pictures provided from the Boston Guide Series, SSI: The Other Welfare and from TransCen YES model program experience in Vermont.
Change in State SSI Caseload Growth

State Ratio of Child SSI Recipients to Children, 2011

- 0–25%
- 25–50%
- 50–100%
- 50–100%
- >100%

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