

## People need food, health care, and stable housing to live, work, and thrive.

**Basic needs programs** like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, rental assistance, and cash assistance **help people meet immediate needs** and have positive **long-term impacts**. Research shows that safe, quality housing; nutritious food; going to the doctor; and having cash helps workers **become economically secure** and children reach their potential.

These aren't just short-term patches. Basic needs programs are **fundamental building blocks** that help people succeed throughout life.

## BASIC NEEDS PROGRAMS SUPPORT...

### Improved health and mental health



**Improved self-reported health.** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants are more likely than low-income non-participants to describe their health as very good or excellent.

**Improved infant and maternal health.** The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) reduces the incidence of low birth weight and improves maternal health, including reduced mental stress.

**Reduced stress and anxiety.** Medicaid coverage provides more consistent primary and preventive care and reduces the rate of depression.

**Improved wellbeing.** Long-term housing subsidies improve health and reduce psychological distress and intimate partner violence.



### Better educational outcomes



**Increased achievement.** SNAP participation can improve elementary school children's reading and math skills and increase high school students' likelihood to graduate.<sup>1</sup>



**Higher likelihood of college enrollment.** Young children in families receiving cash through the EITC are more likely to go to college.<sup>2</sup>



**Increased completion.** Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) increase high school completion, college enrollment, and receipt of a four-year college degree.

### Increased employment and earnings



**Better chances of finding and keeping work.** In Ohio, 75 percent of unemployed Medicaid enrollees say having health care made it easier to look for employment.

**Higher earnings.** Children in poor families receiving income support (consisting of rental or other assistance) earn more as adults.<sup>3</sup>

# ATTACKS ON BASIC NEEDS PROGRAMS UNDERMINE ECONOMIC SECURITY

Today, many jobs are characterized by **low wages**, **unpredictable schedules**, and few (if any) benefits. For these workers and their families, **basic needs programs** are critical to **supplement their earnings**. This support helps them put food on the table, access health coverage, and keep a roof over their heads. It also helps them keep the jobs they have and find work that pays better.

So-called “**work requirements**,” **time limits**, and **mandatory case management** are **barriers to basic needs programs**.<sup>4</sup> These harmful proposals take away food, health coverage, and housing assistance. That doesn’t increase people’s chance of employment or lead them out of poverty; it **makes it harder to find employment** and puts health and wellbeing at risk. Imposing arbitrary barriers to basic needs programs forces people to focus on navigating complex, bureaucratic systems instead of on finding and keeping jobs.

## DON’T undermine the building blocks out of poverty



**DON’T** put arbitrary restrictions on basic needs programs. When people lose benefits because of work requirements, time limits, and other arbitrary rules, they’re hungrier, less healthy, and more stressed—making it even harder to work.

**DON’T** create new red tape for applicants, participants, or state governments. Bureaucratic hurdles cause eligible people to lose benefits, because the process to get and keep coverage is too difficult.

**DON’T** divert funding from basic needs programs. While job services are otherwise helpful, it’s counterproductive to pay for them by siphoning funds from programs that meet basic needs.

## DO help people become economically secure through work

**Provide services that directly support work, such as child care and transportation.** Without them, people can’t get and keep a job.

**Ensure low-wage workers can still access supports as their earnings increase.** Expanding Medicaid coverage and fully funding child care helps people advance economically.

**Offer voluntary job training and advancement services.** Obtaining credentials that are valued by employers can help people earn higher wages.

**Support workers’ ability to maintain employment.** Ensure livable wages, predictable schedules, and benefits like paid family and medical leave and paid sick days.



# FACT SHEET CITATIONS

1. Edward A. Frongillo, Diana F. Jyoti, and Sonya J. Jones, "Food Stamp Program Participations is Associated with Better Academic Learning among School Children," *Journal of Nutrition* 136 (2006), <https://academic.oup.com/jn/article/136/4/1077/4664206>.
2. Michelle Maxfield, "The Effects of the Earned Income Tax Credit on Child Achievement and Long-Term Educational Attainment," 2013, <https://msu.edu/~maxfiel7/20131114%20Maxfield%20ETC%20Child%20Education.pdf>.
3. Greg J. Duncan and Katherine Magnuson, "The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty," 2011, [https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/PathwaysWinter11\\_Duncan.pdf](https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/PathwaysWinter11_Duncan.pdf).
4. Ladonna Pavetti, "Work Requirements Don't Cut Poverty, Evidence Shows," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/work-requirements-dont-cut-poverty-evidence-shows>.