SNAP Cuts Put Youth at Risk

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In a typical month in 2011, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) served 4.3 million low-income young adults ages 18-24, helping them buy needed groceries. These young adults would be particularly affected by the cuts proposed to SNAP in the House-passed Farm bill (H.R. 3102), which is now being considered by a conference committee.

Young adults have struggled to get a toehold in the workforce since the Great Recession -- the share of the population employed for 20-24-year-olds remains more than 6 percentage points below pre-recession levels.[1] The proposed SNAP cuts would be particularly harmful for African American and Hispanic youth, who face even higher unemployment rates than white youth.

Overall, H.R. 3102 is projected to cut spending on SNAP and related programs by $39 billion over ten years, and deny benefits to 3.8 million individuals in 2014. One provision of the House bill would remove state flexibility to waive the three-month time limits on SNAP receipt by unemployed working-age adults without children in specific areas with high unemployment rates. If this policy had been in effect in the most recent year for which data are available, 1.2 million young adults aged 18-24 would have been at risk of losing SNAP benefits because they lived in households without children, did not have an identified disability, and were employed less than 20 hours per week.[2]

Another provision would allow states to choose to impose TANF-like work requirements on SNAP recipients, including parents of infants and young children, and could deny benefits to entire families if the parents did not participate. States that take up this option could keep half the savings resulting from decreased SNAP payments, creating an incentive for states to push people out of the program. In 2011, 2.7 million young adults were part of SNAP households that included minor children.

Even though SNAP is not usually considered a "youth program," SNAP provides critical resources to low-income young adults who are struggling to make ends meet, helping to ensure that they have access to adequate food and nutrition.

To learn more about provisions in the House SNAP bill that would penalize unemployed recipients, even if work opportunities were not available, see *House Farm Bill Places Families at Risk*.

For a list of Farm Bill conference committee members, see *Farm Bill 2013 Senate and House Conferees*.

[1] See BLS data series LNS12300036. The employment to population ratio for 20-24 year olds was 68.1 in January 2008 and 61.9 in September 2013.
[2] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of USDA Household Characteristics Data, FY 2011. Note that some states did not waive the time limit even during the recession, and thus their caseload reflects those who received benefits for the three month period.

Number of Youth at Risk from SNAP Cuts by State[3]

State	Number of adults age 18-24	Able-bodied adults ages 18-24, in childless households, working < 20 hours/week
Alabama	87,000	24,000
Alaska	9,000	3,000
Arizona	93,000	24,000
Arkansas	54,000	12,000
California	360,000	104,000
Colorado	31,000	5,000
Connecticut	31,000	8,000
Delaware	12,000	3,000
Dist. of Columbia	16,000	5,000
Florida	288,000	122,000
Georgia	187,000	49,000
Hawaii	15,000	5,000
Idaho	23,000	7,000
Illinois	173,000	47,000
Indiana	89,000	23,000
Iowa	39,000	10,000
Kansas	30,000	9,000
Kentucky	79,000	22,000
Louisiana	100,000	29,000
Maine	25,000	8,000
Maryland	65,000	19,000
Massachusetts	66,000	18,000
Michigan	225,000	76,000
Minnesota	47,000	16,000
Mississippi	61,000	14,000
Missouri	95,000	32,000

State	Number of adults age 18-24	Able-bodied adults ages 18-24, in childless households, working < 20 hours/week
Montana	12,000	4,000
Nebraska	16,000	2,000
Nevada	30,000	9,000
New Hampshire	9,000	2,000
New Jersey	59,000	14,000
New Mexico	44,000	8,000
New York	253,000	67,000
North Carolina	171,000	51,000
North Dakota	6,000	1,000
Ohio	181,000	46,000
Oklahoma	63,000	13,000
Oregon	88,000	36,000
Pennsylvania	162,000	37,000
Rhode Island	15,000	4,000
South Carolina	84,000	30,000
South Dakota	10,000	2,000
Tennessee	124,000	45,000
Texas	324,000	36,000
Utah	27,000	8,000
Vermont	8,000	3,000
Virginia	71,000	17,000
Washington	110,000	51,000
West Virginia	27,000	7,000
Wisconsin	71,000	17,000
Wyoming	4,000	1,000
National Total	**4,273,000**	**1,207,000**

[3] Calculations are from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' analysis of USDA Household Characteristics Data, FY 2011. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand. Additionally, the national total includes Guam and the Virgin Islands. These figures are based on the latest available data, fiscal year 2011. The current figures may be different because of changes in the number of individuals who are eligible for and apply to participate in SNAP and in state eligibility for, and take-up of, waivers from the three-month cut-off. We have not attempted to estimate how many would actually be affected, which depends on future state policy choices.