

2025 Budget Stakes: Proposals Would Reduce Support for Children



Proposals that Congress could enact this year, including through [fast-track “reconciliation” legislation](#), would reduce assistance that helps children in families with low incomes get enough to eat, see a doctor when they are sick, and in other ways meet their basic needs and thrive. This assistance matters for children's [health](#), [success in school](#), [future earnings](#), and other outcomes.

Reducing Access to School Meals and SNAP

Republican lawmakers could soon advance [proposals](#) that would take away food assistance from low-income families with children or make it harder for these families to get the food aid they need, which would increase their grocery costs and the risk of their children experiencing food insecurity.

Cutting SNAP, which serves 1 in 5 U.S. children. [Staggering cuts](#) to SNAP could take away or reduce food assistance from tens of millions of people, raising families' grocery costs and increasing the risk that children don't get enough to eat. One proposal could mean that children don't have access to enough food assistance if their parents can't meet a work requirement. [Work requirements in SNAP](#) have proven to be laden with red tape, taking away assistance from many people who are working or should be exempt and those who have been laid off and are looking for work. They also are ineffective at increasing employment. Another proposal would require states to [pay part of SNAP food benefit costs](#), which have been 100 percent federally funded for 50 years to ensure that people in all states get the food assistance they need. This protection, which particularly benefits children in poorer states, would disappear if costs are shifted to states and they cut benefits and eligibility because they can't fully cover the new costs.

Making it harder to get free school meals. Currently, schools serving large numbers of children in low-income families can provide free school meals to all students instead of collecting and processing applications. This option, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), cuts down on paperwork for families and schools and reduces the stigma children can feel about receiving free meals. Under a proposal to [severely limit](#) the option, [24,000 schools in every state, serving more than 12 million children](#), would no longer be able to use CEP. Many children would likely miss out on meals, and grocery bills would rise for families who don't qualify or don't realize they have to apply for free or reduced-price school meals.

Cutting Health Care Through Medicaid

Medicaid provides health coverage to 2 in 5 children. Cutting it by hundreds of billions of dollars would lead to eligibility or benefit cuts that could reduce access to care for both children and parents.

Taking Medicaid away from people who don't meet work requirements. [Unnecessary and burdensome work requirements](#) would cause many parents to lose coverage. If low-income parents have to spend more on health care, they will have less money for rent and food for the entire household, and they risk incurring significant medical debt for any health care they receive. Losing coverage can also impact parents' health, making it harder for them to care for their children. And, a decline in parents' coverage will leave more children uninsured, since studies show parents are [likelier to sign up their eligible children](#) when the whole family can get coverage.

Jeopardizing school-based health care services. Medicaid helps pay for medical services schools provide to ensure students with disabilities have access to the supports they need. It also covers immunizations, health screenings, and other services schools provide to Medicaid-eligible children. And it helps many

schools pay the salaries of nurses, counselors, and others who assist *all* students. Medicaid cuts could jeopardize schools' ability to provide these services.

Other Possible Cuts Would Hurt Children

Eliminating Head Start for disadvantaged children and families. Head Start promotes healthy development and school readiness among low-income infants, toddlers, and preschoolers by providing educational, health, nutritional, and other services and engaging families in children's learning. It served over [700,000 children](#) in 2024, but only one-quarter of eligible children actually receive help from the program due to limited funding. [Eliminating](#) Head Start would undermine children's chances for success and make it impossible for many parents to work due to the loss of child care.

Cutting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for disabled children. SSI reaches only very low-income children with [serious disabilities](#). [Cutting children's SSI benefits](#) if another family member also receives SSI would shrink benefits for a quarter-million disabled children by *up to 66 percent*, making it harder for families to afford basic needs as well as disability-related expenses.

Taking away the Child Tax Credit from U.S. citizen children if their parents file federal taxes but lack a Social Security number. The credit, worth up to \$2,000 per child, reduces child poverty. [Denying the credit](#) to these citizen children would increase poverty, impacting a particularly large number of Latino children, hurting children's [long-term outcomes](#) and their ability to contribute to the economy as adults.

Cutting Title I funding for schools serving students from families with low incomes. Title I grants reduce long-standing funding disparities between low-income and wealthier communities, supporting services that help students from low-income families succeed. A [25 percent cut in Title I](#) would force schools to eliminate [72,000 teacher positions](#). [Phasing out Title I](#) would eliminate some [180,000 positions](#).

Eliminating funding used to provide social services to vulnerable children. The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) gives states [flexible funding](#) to meet the specialized needs of children and other vulnerable populations. Many states focus SSBG funds on child welfare services or child care. [Eliminating SSBG](#) likely would create significant service gaps for children who have experienced or are at risk of abuse or neglect; it also would worsen the already severe shortage of child care assistance for low-income families.

Alternative Path Would Help Children Thrive

Congress should strengthen assistance that helps low-income families prepare their children for a better future. For example, it could [encourage more schools](#) to serve free meals to all students by improving federal reimbursements for schools' meal costs. Congress also could [expand the Child Tax Credit](#), especially for the 17 million children left out of the full credit because their families' incomes are too low.

Medicaid Has Long-Term Benefits for Kids

Children who are eligible for Medicaid health coverage:



Do better in school



Miss fewer school days due to illness or injury



More likely to finish high school, attend college, and graduate from college



Have fewer emergency-room visits and hospitalizations as adults



Earn more as adults

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