

Proposals to expand work requirements will not increase employment, will penalize working people, and will create wasteful administrative costs.

The current SNAP program includes work requirements for individuals from 16 to 59 years old.¹ Able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) are already required to work at least 80 hours per month to receive more than three months of benefits in any three-year period.² Despite these provisions, some lawmakers have proposed further expansions of these requirements through age 64 and removal of exemptions, such as those in place to support veterans and people experiencing homelessness.³

Work Requirements Do Not Increase Employment

- Research shows that increasing SNAP work requirements for ABAWDs does not increase employment.⁴
 - **Currently, at least one working age, non-disabled adult works while receiving SNAP benefits in most households.**⁵ The majority of exempt participants are children and individuals with disabilities.⁶
 - **SNAP participants who do not work face significant barriers to employment including:**
 - **Lack of wraparound support:** The nation is experiencing a childcare crisis.⁷ Many people with low incomes do not have affordable childcare options while they go to work.⁸ They also face challenges with transportation to available jobs.⁹
 - **Lack of available jobs:** People with low incomes are least likely to find regular work at sustaining wages, even when overall unemployment is low.¹⁰
- **Incentives to work already exist.** There is no financial incentive to rely solely on SNAP. Working even a minimum wage job pays more than relying solely on benefits.¹¹ Working also provides access to the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit – crucial supports for families with low incomes.¹²

Work Requirements Penalize Working People

Work requirements cause people to lose SNAP benefits during a temporary break in employment.

- SNAP is a stopgap for working households: 80% of non-exempt households (those with at least one non-disabled adult under 60) and almost 90% of non-exempt households with children work in the year before or after receiving SNAP.¹³
- Uncontrollable factors, such as fewer shifts due to a slow retail season or illness without paid leave, can temporarily push people under the 20 hours-per-week requirement.¹⁴
- Many people lose benefits simply due to the administrative burdens of work requirements, such as complicated recertification processes.¹⁵

Denying SNAP benefits causes lower employment rates for applicants over time.¹⁶

- Research shows that people who were denied SNAP benefits had a **39% decrease in continued employment** over 3 years compared to people who received SNAP.¹⁷
- Food insecurity and hunger impair cognitive functioning and exacerbate stress, anxiety, and depression – significant barriers to sustained employment and upward economic mobility.¹⁸

Work Requirements Decrease Program Efficiency

- Work requirements increase SNAP administrative costs, which were around \$7 billion in 2023.¹⁹
- For example, a 2023 Iowa bill imposing new SNAP eligibility verification procedures is projected to **cost over 2.5 times** the usual SNAP implementation costs due to increased workforce and IT requirements.²⁰

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- ¹ SNAP Work Requirements, USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/work-requirements>.
- ² SNAP Work Requirements, USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/work-requirements>.
- ³ *Republican SNAP Proposals Could Take Food Away From Millions of Low-Income Individuals and Families*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (January 13, 2025), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/republican-snap-proposals-could-take-food-away-from-millions-of-low-income>.
- ⁴ Lauren Bauer and Chloe N. East, *A Primer on SNAP Work Requirements*, The Hamilton Project (Oct. 2023) at 4 (citing Gray et al. (2023)), https://www.hamiltonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/20231004_THP_SNAPWorkRequirements.pdf
- ⁵ *The Relationship Between SNAP and Work Among Low-Income Households*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (January 30, 2013), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/the-relationship-between-snap-and-work-among-low-income-households>.
- ⁶ “More than two-thirds of SNAP participants are not expected to work, primarily because they are children, older adults, or disabled people.” *Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (Nov. 25, 2024), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap#how-much-does-snap-cost-cbpp-anchor>.
- ⁷ *Vance and Walz Agree Child Care Costs Too Much. Here Are 3 Reasons It’s So Expensive.*, Market Watch (Oct. 2, 2024), <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/vance-and-walz-agree-child-care-costs-too-much-here-are-3-reasons-why-its-so-expensive-969fc84a>.
- ⁸ *Child Care Expenses Push an Estimated 134,000 Families Into Poverty Each Year*, Center for American Progress (Oct 31, 2024), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/child-care-expenses-push-an-estimated-134000-families-into-poverty-each-year/>
- ⁹ *Transportation Needs of Disadvantaged Populations: Where, When, and How?*, FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (February 2013) at 13, https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/FTA_Report_No._0030.pdf.
- ¹⁰ Work requirements for safety net programs like SNAP and Medicaid, Economic Policy Institute (Jan. 24, 2025), <https://www.epi.org/publication/snap-medicaid-work-requirements/#epi-toc-6> (refer Figures A and B).
- ¹¹ *It Pays to Work: Work Incentives and the Safety Net*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (Mar. 3, 2016), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/it-pays-to-work-work-incentives-and-the-safety-net>.
- ¹² *It Pays to Work: Work Incentives and the Safety Net*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (Mar. 3, 2016), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/it-pays-to-work-work-incentives-and-the-safety-net>.
- ¹³ *Most Working-Age SNAP Participants Work, But Often in Unstable Jobs*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (Mar. 15, 2018), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/most-working-age-snap-participants-work-but-often-in-unstable-jobs>; *Most SNAP Participants and Households Work*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (June 9, 2022), <https://www.cbpp.org/most-snap-participants-and-households-work-4>.
- ¹⁴ Lauren Bauer and Chloe N. East, *A Primer on SNAP Work Requirements*, The Hamilton Project (Oct. 2023) at 9, https://www.hamiltonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/20231004_THP_SNAPWorkRequirements.pdf.
- ¹⁵ Pamela Herd and Donald Moynihan, *How Administrative Burdens Can Harm Health*, Health Affairs (Oct. 2020), <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20200904.405159/>.
- ¹⁶ Lauren Bauer and Chloe N. East, *A Primer on SNAP Work Requirements*, The Hamilton Project (Oct. 2023) at 10, https://www.hamiltonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/20231004_THP_SNAPWorkRequirements.pdf.
- ¹⁷ See Lauren Bauer and Chloe N. East, *A Primer on SNAP Work Requirements*, The Hamilton Project (Oct. 2023) at 10 (see figure 2, citing Cook and East (2023)), https://www.hamiltonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/20231004_THP_SNAPWorkRequirements.pdf.
- ¹⁸ *Proposed Rule: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents RIN 0584-AE57*, <https://www.clasp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CLASP-SNAP-Comment-FINAL.pdf>.
- ¹⁹ \$7 billion is an estimate based on the roughly 6% of the \$115 billion SNAP total budget. *Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (Nov. 25, 2024), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap#how-much-does-snap-cost-cbpp-anchor>.
- ²⁰ *Work Requirements Are Expensive for the Government To Administer and Don’t Lead to More Employment*, CAP 20 (Apr. 25, 2023), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/work-requirements-are-expensive-for-the-government-to-administer-and-dont-lead-to-more-employment/> (citing Fiscal Note SF 494, LEGISLATIVE SERVICES AGENCY (Mar. 22, 2023), <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/FN/1371118.pdf>).