

Analyzing the Health Impacts of Federal Legislation to Modify the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

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A collaboration between Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts.



Presentation Overview

- Background/overview
- Key findings
- Approach to federal legislative HIA; focus on implementation
- Initial impacts
- Next steps

Policy Context and Background

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Authorized under Title IV of the U.S. farm bill
- Federal government's principal mechanism for alleviating food insecurity and hunger, improving nutrition, and increasing food purchasing power of low-income Americans
- Federal spending on SNAP has grown from \$30 billion in FY 2007 to \$80.4 billion in FY 2012
- Current proposals affect able-bodied adults

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130 percent FPL – family 4, gross monthly income up to about 2,500; 28K per year

due to rise in poverty

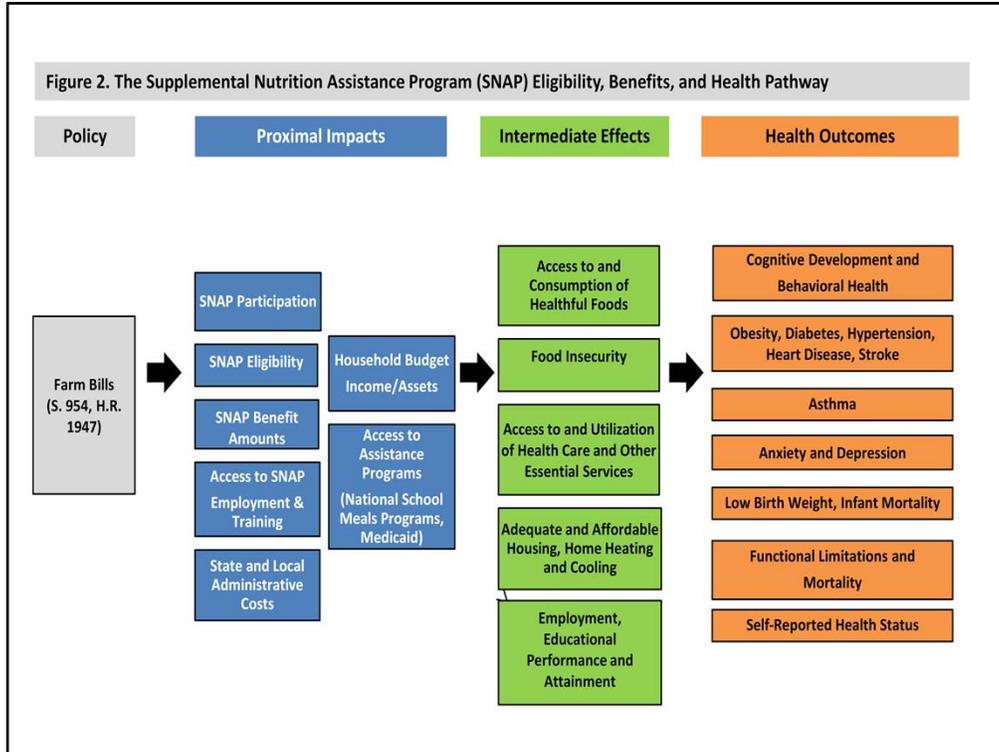
and employment, changes to state eligibility practices,
and a temporary increase in benefit from ARRA factors

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Proposed bills analyzed: H.R. 1947 and S. 954 Changes to SNAP

Current Law (Farm Bill 2008)	House Agriculture Committee (H.R. 1947) CBO estimated savings: \$20 billion over 10 years	Senate (S. 954) CBO estimated savings: \$4 billion over 10 years
<u>"Broad-based" categorical eligibility (BBCE)</u> Households that are eligible for SNAP because they receive a non-cash TANF funded benefit or service, such as an informational pamphlet or 1-800-number.	Eliminates	No change
<u>"Narrow" categorical eligibility (NCE)</u> Households that are eligible for SNAP because they receive a TANF funded benefit such as child care or counseling.	Eliminates	No change
<u>Standard Utility Allowance (SUA)</u> Households that receive any benefit amount (at least \$1) from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can claim a higher SUA when calculating the shelter deduction and net income, resulting in the receipt of higher SNAP benefit amounts. "Heat and Eat" in 14 States and D.C.	Raises the minimum from \$1 to \$20 per year.	Raises the minimum from \$1 to \$10 per year.

Figure 2. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Eligibility, Benefits, and Health Pathway



Methods

- Policy analysis
- Contracted with Mathematica Policy Research for quantitative analysis; MATH SIPP+ microsimulation model
- Conducted a systematic review of the literature of the health impacts (n=884 sources reviewed)
- Stakeholder engagement:
 - Key informant interviews with n=7 SNAP administrators
 - Interviews and focus groups with n=43 SNAP participants
 - Advisory Committee (n=5)
 - Key informant interviews (~30)
 - Hill visits with Congressional Staff (30)

Key Findings

- Estimate that as many as 2.7 million households, or 5.1 million individuals, could lose benefits (for comparison, the CBO has estimated that 1.8 million individuals could lose benefits)
- Project that changes proposed by the Senate would reduce monthly benefits for an estimated 304,000 current SNAP households.
- SNAP has large and long-term influences on health, especially through its impact on food insecurity. SNAP reduces household food insecurity by 18 to 30 percent. Under the proposed changes:
 - Half a million food insecure would lose benefits and as many as 300,000 newly ineligible would become food insecure

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The analysis projects that between 1.7 million and 5 million people would lose their SNAP benefits if the proposed changes in the House were to take place. Compared with the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate of 1.8 million participants would lose SNAP benefits, our analysis suggests that far more people could be at risk. To produce the most accurate estimates possible, the Health Impact Project used the recently updated dataset released by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and relied on a model that includes information on participants' assets.

Key Findings

- Poverty increases the risk of many illnesses. Under the proposed changes to SNAP eligibility, the U.S. poverty rate would increase by just over half a percent
 - Based on current rates of diabetes in relation to poverty in U.S. communities, this increase in poverty could translate to a growth in government and private-sector medical costs of nearly \$15 billion over 10 years.
- Proposed standards for retailers to improve the quality of food available to SNAP participants
- Check out our website for more findings! www.healthimpactproject.org

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Implementing a Federal Legislative HIA

- Scoping: How do you scope a moving target or shifting stakeholder interests? What is the best way to identify key stakeholders and decision makers?
- Assessment and Recommendations: How do you acquire representative qualitative or quantitative data? How do you address data gaps? Are there special circumstances for developing recommendations?

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Assessment and Recommendations: How do you acquire representative qualitative or quantitative data? How do you address data gaps? Are there special circumstances for developing recommendations?[feel free to edit this one]
Reporting: When, how and to whom do you release findings? What is the best strategy for communicating to legislators?
Stakeholder engagement: What does it look like for federal level HIAs?
... and after each question, you could take a brief moment to say – for example with scoping, we followed this legislation through several stages that required changes in the scope of analysis. It also required us to invest a good amount of resources in understanding the proposed changes and stakeholder interests related to the changes.

Implementing a Federal Legislative HIA

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Initial Impacts

- Health inserted in the discussion
- Developed relationship with USDA and other stakeholders
- USDA approach to analysis
- Developed relationships with Legislative Staff
- Media coverage in U.S. News media outlets (e.g., NYT with circulation of 1.8 million), trade publications, policymaker outlets, blogs, and social media
- Findings still being circulated as deliberations continue
 - Used in hill visits with legislators
 - Used in briefing with USDA

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Next Steps

- Final HIA report out to the AC for review
- Make final edits, update references, new estimates since July 2013
- Finalize report and send through internal publications process
- Continue impact analysis
- Write papers to contribute to scholarship; submit papers to peer review journals

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