



Thousands of children potentially eligible for Supplemental Security Income aren't getting it Medicaid data could help find them



There may be thousands of children with disabilities eligible for government benefits that are not receiving it

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides cash assistance to people with disabilities who have limited financial resources. Low-income families can qualify for SSI if their child has a significant disability.

From 2013 to 2021, the number of children receiving SSI fell by nearly 20 percent, and there was a particularly large decline in applications during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because people still need services, the declining enrollment suggests that there might be more children who qualify for SSI but are not enrolled. Researchers are investigating ways to identify children that might be eligible for SSI but have not yet enrolled.

Medicaid data might be a useful place to look for potential SSI enrollees

Medicaid offers health insurance to individuals and families with low income, and many people enrolled in Medicaid might also be eligible to receive SSI benefits. For this reason, researchers used Medicaid data to estimate



From **2013 to 2021** the number of children receiving SSI fell by nearly **20%** with a particularly large decline in applications during the COVID-19 pandemic

Estimates indicate that **over 110,000 children are potentially eligible for SSI, an increase of 9.7 %** relative to current child SSI recipients.

the number of Medicaid enrollees who might be eligible for but are currently not receiving SSI.

Using Medicaid data, researchers estimate that more than 110,000 children might be eligible for SSI but are not currently enrolled in the program, which would be an increase of nearly 10 percent over the current number of children who receive SSI. However, the number of eligible children may be higher or lower depending on how the calculations define eligibility. In calculating their estimate, researchers accounted for differences in states, including in their Medicaid programs, and this number includes children who would very likely meet the eligibility criteria for SSI.

Children who might qualify for SSI but are not enrolled might have different characteristics than current child SSI recipients

To qualify for SSI, children must have a physical or mental impairment that significantly affects their daily activities. Researchers found that children who are potentially eligible for SSI:

- / Use a lot of health care, and often use more care than current child SSI recipients
- / Frequently have chronic conditions indicating that they have developmental delays
- / Face barriers to enrolling, such as difficulty applying for the program or knowing that they are eligible for SSI benefits



The data are a starting point, but more work is necessary to identify and enroll children in SSI

Data alone cannot paint the full picture of a person's disability, but they are a useful starting point to identify children that might be eligible for SSI.

If Medicaid and SSI data could be connected in the future, it might help identify children who are potentially eligible for SSI to conduct targeted outreach. Using data could also help streamline the application process, meaning more families could be connected to the resources they need.



In
Dec 2021
about
40 million children
throughout the United States
were enrolled in Medicaid

In
2023
the federal maximum
payment from SSI is
\$914 per month



Authors: Emily Harrison, Michael Levere, David Wittenburg, and Amal Harrati.

Information about this topic can be found at ["How Many Medicaid Recipients Might be Eligible for SSI?"](#)