

Experiences of Child Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Recipients Around Their Age 18 Redetermination

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May 4, 2009

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Purpose

- **Current Policy**
 - At age 18 child SSI recipients must be redetermined under adult SSI disability criteria
- **Policy Challenge**
 - Little is known about transition experiences
 - Transition can have lifelong implications
- **Purpose of paper**
 - Examine relationships between pre-age 18 characteristics of child SSI recipients and post-age 18 outcomes using a unique linked data source

Background and Methods

SSI Is Largest Cash Transfer Program for Children with Disabilities

- **Targeted to low-income children (under age 18) who meet**
 - Income
 - Asset
 - Disability criteria
- **Benefits**
 - In 2009, \$674 monthly maximum SSI payment
 - Access to other supports, including Medicaid
- **1.1 million youth receive benefits**



Age 18 Redetermination Process

- **Change in definition at age 18**
 - Child definition focuses on “marked and severe functional limitations”
 - Adult definition focuses on a person’s ability to perform substantial gainful activities (SGA)
- **Approximately 1/3 of child SSI recipients are no longer receiving SSI benefits after age 18**
- **Between 1996 through 2004**
 - 400,00 recipients had age-18 redeterminations

Sources: Social Security Advisory Board 2006 and Loprest and Wittenburg (2007)

Methodological Approach

- **Data**

- **National Survey of Children and Families (NSCF)**
- **Social Security Administrative (SSA) records**
- **Analysis Sample**
 - **Recipients at age 17 from linked NSCF-SSA data**

- **Approach**

- **Descriptive analysis of recipient characteristics**
- **Regression model of likelihood of being on/off SSI at age 19**
 - **“On SSI” and “off SSI” at age 19 based on January SSA benefit status in year age 19**

Findings

Child SSI Recipients at Age 17

Characteristics Can Influence Transition Experience

Characteristics	Percent
Demographic and Family Characteristics	
Male	62.9
Dropped out/out of school/other	30.4
Single-parent family	55.1
Impairment Characteristics	
Mental retardation (MR)	49.6
Mental and behavioral disorders (other than MR)	25.8
Systems disorders	14.8
Other disabilities	9.8
Age at Program Entry	
Under 10	57.1

Source: Authors' tabulations using linked 2001-2002 NSCF and SSA data files.



Probability of Continued SSI Participation at Age 19 Varies by Program Subgroups (Regression Findings)

- **Impairment**
 - Mental and behavioral disorders: More likely to be off SSI at 19
- **Program Entry**
 - Child SSI entry between ages 10 to 13: More likely to be off SSI at 19
- **Special Health Needs**
 - Self-reported need prior age 18: Less likely to be off SSI at 19

Source: Tabulations from Table 6 , Column 1-5 from Hemmeter, Kauff and Wittenburg (forthcoming) using linked 2001-2002 NSCF and SSA data files

Probability of Continued SSI Participation at Age 19 Varies by Program Subgroups (Regression Findings continued)

- **Demographic**
 - Female: More likely to be off SSI at 19
 - Race: Not statistically significant when controlling for other factors
- **Social**
 - Arrest history prior to 18: More likely to be off SSI at 19.
- **Employment Prior to Age 18**
 - Employment history prior to age 18: More likely to be off SSI at 19.
 - Substantial earnings (>\$2k): More likely to be off SSI at 19.

Source: Tabulations from Table 6 , Column 5 from Hemmeter, Kauff and Wittenburg (forthcoming) using linked 2001-2002 NSCF and SSA data files.

Former Child SSI Recipients Appear to Have Limited Options at Age 19

- **Among off SSI at 19 group**
 - 60 percent were working at age 19
 - Only 25% were earning a wage above their old SSI benefit
 - 40 percent who were not employed at age 19
 - 35 percent had prior employment history
 - 47 percent had dropped of school
- **Among those on SSI at 19**
 - Likely long program durations
 - Less than 30 percent were working at age 19

Source: Tables 7 and 8 from Hemmeter, Kauff and Wittenburg (forthcoming) using linked 2001-2002 NSCF and SSA data files. “On” and off SSI is based on SSI status in January of year youth turns 19.

Conclusions

Re-examining Age 18 Redetermination Process

- **Some outcomes consistent with policy goals:**
 - Off SSI at age 19 group includes people who
 - Report fewer health needs
 - Majority are working
- **Some outcomes indicate problems:**
 - Probability of being off SSI varies by subgroups
 - Youth with mental and behavioral disorders
 - Other non-impairment subgroups (e.g., arrests)
 - Off SSI at age 19 group also includes with limited human capital prospects
 - High rates of previous arrests
 - High dropout rate

Alternatives to Consider

- **Alternatives to “all/nothing” age 18 redetermination**
 - Time-limited “work/education” paths that extend benefits (e.g., to age 21 or 25) for youth who develop their human capital
- **Interventions to smooth transition**
 - Youth Transition Demonstration is currently in the field testing six intervention models
 - Interventions to youth with mental impairments
 - E.g., Mental Health Treatment Study

References

- Hemmeter, Jeffrey, Jacqueline Kauff and David Wittenburg. **Changing Circumstances: Experiences of Child SSI Recipients Before and After Their Age-18 Redetermination for Adult Benefits,**” *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, forthcoming.
- Loprest, Pamela and David Wittenburg. **Post Transition Experiences of Former Child SSI Recipients, Social Service Review Social Service Review**, vol. 4, December 2007, (2007) pp. 583-608.
- Social Security Advisory Board. **Statement on the Supplemental Security Income Program**, at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OACT/SSIR/SSI06/board.html>, 2006.



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