

WORK REQUIREMENT RESEARCH SHOWS

Major Costs with Minor Impact



The Trump Administration has proposed to add work requirements to HUD rental assistance programs. While several MTW PHAs already operate programs with work components, more data is needed on the impact of work requirements and what is required to implement them successfully.

Research offers several insights into the impact of work requirements. Funds are needed to support the administrative infrastructure necessary to establish, monitor, and enforce work requirements. Participants are more likely to be set up for success through adequate workforce development, employment training, and job search support. Youth-focused workforce development programs can prepare the next generation for employment in high-paying jobs. Finally, continuity of housing assistance for low-income family members who cannot work must be ensured so homelessness does not increase.

Work Requirements Are Costly

- Requiring tenants who are neither elderly nor disabled to work toward leaving assisted housing by participating in a self-sufficiency program would cost roughly \$10 billion if the number of assisted households was held constant.^[i]

Studies on Work Requirements at MTW PHAs

- A 2018 study examining 9 MTW agencies with work requirements found:^[ii]
 - Only between 0 to 7% of public housing households that would have been subject to work requirements reported welfare as their primary source of income (across 8 agencies).
 - Just 1 to 13 percent of households utilizing vouchers would have been subject to proposed work requirements across nine agencies.
- According to a 2019 case study of the Chicago Housing Authority, an MTW agency, work requirements, only 17% of CHA's residents were subject to the work requirement.^[iii]
 - The household-level average annual income per person subject to the work requirement increased from \$11,568 in 2010 to \$12,712 in 2017, an improvement of less than \$1,200 that still left families well below the poverty threshold and in need of rental assistance.
 - Researchers could not attribute the increases to the work requirement policy and these increases coincided with an increase in Chicago's minimum wage and economic recovery from the Great Recession.

Learnings from the Moving to Work Demonstration

At least 9 MTW PHAs have implemented a work requirement policy and reported challenges including:

- Costs of offering services and case management for residents subject to the work requirement
- Achieving resident awareness and understanding of the work requirement
- Concerns about going over the “benefits cliff,” causing loss of other benefits
- Excessive staff time spent on compliance monitoring and tracking
- Local job market conditions and low minimum wage make achieving self-sufficiency difficult for assisted households

Findings from Work Requirements in TANF, Medicaid, and SNAP Programs

- The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families’ (TANF) work requirement policy is the most well-researched across all federal benefit programs that have such a policy.^[iv]
 - Any gains in employment were modest at best.
 - Any employment gains faded over time.
 - The TANF work requirement policy’s penalties for noncompliance led to an increase in poverty, especially among single-mother families.
 - TANF’s work requirement policy did not help recipients secure and retain stable jobs, as working was already common among TANF recipients both before entering the program and after exiting it.
- Work requirements in Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) have had no discernable positive impact on employment and have led to decreases in program participation/coverage for recipients.
- Medicaid work requirements could cause 36 million enrollees to lose their coverage.^[v]
- Most adults on Medicaid under age 65 are already working; the few who are not working face barriers to work, such as illness or disability, caregiving responsibilities, or school attendance.^[vi]

^[i] [Congressional Budget Office, 2015](#)

^[ii] [Urban Institute, 2018](#)

^[iii] [Urban Institute, 2019](#)

^[iv] [Congressional Budget Office, 2022; Urban Institute, 2020](#)

^[v] [CBPP, 2025](#)

^[vi] [Kaiser Family Foundation, 2025](#)



The Council of Large Public Housing Authorities is a national non-profit organization that works to preserve and improve public and affordable housing through advocacy, research, policy analysis and public education. CLPHA’s 85 members represent virtually every major metropolitan area in the country. Together they manage 40 percent of the nation’s public housing program; administer more than a quarter of the Housing Choice Voucher program; and operate a wide array of other housing programs.