

Table 14 Common U.S. Public Benefits Programs for Kids and Families³

BASIC NEED	PUBLIC BENEFIT	DESCRIPTION
Food	SNAP and EBT	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides financial assistance to qualifying families based on meeting a low-income threshold. Benefits are received through an Electronic Benefit Transfer “EBT” card, which recipients use like a debit card to buy groceries. Each month, cash gets automatically deposited onto the EBT card. EBT cards are accepted at many grocery stores, convenience stores, and some farmers markets. SNAP EBT cards are a modern version of food stamps.
Food and healthcare	WIC	The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a benefits program for pregnant and new moms, babies, and children under five with nutritional risks. WIC provides food (e.g., formula), healthcare referrals, and no-cost social services to eligible moms and their young children.
Financial assistance and job training	TANF	The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a benefits program to help eligible families reach economic self-sufficiency. TANF recipients receive direct cash assistance for basic needs, access to education and employment services, and certain health or social service referrals and services.
Health and human services	Medicaid	Medicaid is a federal and state program that provides eligible families and kids with free or low-cost health and human service care. Medicaid varies by state and serves as the largest funder of long-term care, including institutional and other residential care for kids with disabilities. Some states run Medicaid as managed care, others as fee for service, and some a combination for different populations and programs. Kids have special status under Early and Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) and Medicaid dollars, which can cover costs for many of their service and support needs. ⁴
Healthcare	“Obamacare”	The Affordable Care Act created the Healthcare Marketplace, which provides affordable healthcare coverage for individuals and families from different income levels, including those living at or below the poverty line.
Financial assistance and human services	SSI	Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides monthly cash assistance to families who are low income and have children with a disability. These cash benefits are meant to offset the costs of basic needs and services related to the disability. Children who have lost a parent may also be eligible to receive SSI survivor’s benefits; to be eligible, their parent must have died after the age of eligibility for Social Security retirement benefits to start.
Childcare	Child Care Subsidies	The Child Care and Development Fund provides subsidies to families who qualify as low income to put toward stable, high-quality childcare services.
Housing for unaccompanied youth	Temporary Shelter; TLP and ILP programs	The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act provides qualifying community organizations with federal funds to offer housing and services to older youth who have run away, are homeless, and/or are in foster care. There are three types of programs: temporary shelters, transitional living programs (TLP), and independent living programs (ILP). Qualifying services include street outreach, counseling, and case management services.

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Housing for families	Public Housing	The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides housing assistance to qualifying families. These programs are meant to help families secure decent and safe rentals. Housing assistance includes housing vouchers or subsidized or free housing in the form of single-family homes, condominiums, or apartments. There are planned public housing communities and apartment buildings, as well as mixed-use or scattered site supportive housing options.
Transportation and education stabilizing services for youth who are homeless	McKinney-Vento	The U.S. Department of Education via the McKinney-Vento Act provides money to states and schools to pay for transportation, education services, and designated staff to identify and support students who meet the department's definition of homeless. McKinney-Vento ensures that students who are homeless can enroll in school immediately, even if they lack records; stay at school, even if they move out of boundaries, if it's in their best interest; and receive the supports they need to experience stability and success in school. Every state has a McKinney-Vento coordinator, and every district has a local homeless education liaison in charge of identifying students and coordinating services.
Transitional support services for older youth in or aging out of foster care	Chafee	The John H. Chafee Foster Care for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee Program) provides direct cash assistance to older youth who have been or are in foster care to use toward education and employment training and supports, and the transition out of foster care and into adulthood. Funds can pay for tuition, job training, or related costs like childcare, transportation, or rent. There are also nongovernmental services and scholarships available for youth who are Chafee-eligible.
Emergency internet	Emergency Broadband Benefit	The USAC Affordable Connectivity Program provides qualifying low-income households with a \$30 monthly discount for broadband services. For households on tribal lands, the discount is \$75 per month. The program also provides a one-time discount of \$100 toward the purchase of a computer or tablet.
In-school food services	Free and Reduced Lunch/Summer Meals Program	The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program—two federal programs that waive or reduce costs of school breakfast and lunch for students living in households that meet a certain low-income threshold. The USDA's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) ensures those same students can continue to access fresh, healthy meals during the summer months. This direct reimbursement program enables schools and community centers to become approved SFSP sites and provide meals to qualifying students when school is not in session.
Education and developmental intervention services for children with possible and diagnosed disabilities	Early Intervention	Early intervention is a free state-run program that helps families obtain screenings, services, and supports if they are concerned or know their child has a developmental delay and/or disability. At a minimum, states provide no-cost evaluations and assessment services, and the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

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Intervention services for children with diagnosed disabilities or other limiting conditions	IEP/504	<p>The U.S. Department of Education via the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) administers funds and mandates to states and schools to ensure that the educational and developmental needs of students with disabilities, developmental delays, and other conditions are met in school.</p> <p>An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a plan jointly developed by school staff, family, student, and relevant specialists. IEPs are for students who qualify for special education services and supports. An IEP articulates the unique needs a student has, and any specialized services and instructions needed to make their learning and school experience successful.</p> <p>A 504 plan is for students who may not need specialized instruction but do need special accommodations and accessibilities at school (and/or in getting to and from school). A 504 plan is important for students with certain physical and mental health challenges, or with disabilities that require non-instructional supports during the day or during specific times of year.</p>
Workforce training and re-entry supports	WIOA youth programs	<p>The U.S. Department of Labor via the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides funding to local workforce boards to distribute to qualifying programs and schools to support young people who aren't in school or working—sometimes referred to as "opportunity youth." Through WIOA, eligible young people can receive free education and employment programs and services, including YouthBuild, job training, counseling, case management, summer jobs, mentorship, tutoring, and re-entry supports if they are justice involved.</p>
Financial assistance for higher education	FAFSA and Federal Student Aid	<p>The FAFSA is an application young people and families use to determine eligibility for tuition assistance and need-based scholarships in college and other postsecondary credentialing programs. Individual higher education institutions may offer additional need- and merit-based financial assistance.</p>
Cash and savings assistance	IDAs and other matched savings programs	<p>Assets for Independence (AFI) is a community-based approach that assists children and families who struggle financially to save and build toward economic security. AFI uses Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and similar matched-savings accounts to grow wealth. Often, IDA programs will match participants dollar for dollar up to a 3:1 match. Matched dollars can then be accessed and used to pay for assets, including housing or a car.</p>