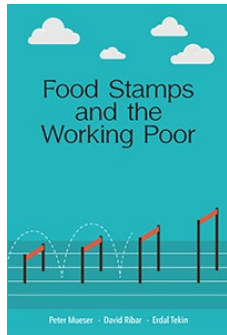




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NEW TITLE RELEASE



Food Stamps and the Working Poor

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June 10, 2019

KALAMAZOO, Mich.— The Food Stamp Program plays a significant role in the nation’s social safety net. Now officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) but still referred to as “food stamps,” the program helps low-income individuals and households become self-sufficient and consume more nutritious diets. A means-tested program, it operates as a federal/state partnership in which the federal government foots the cost of the benefits and a portion of the states’ administrative costs and sets the program rules, including the formulas for eligibility and benefits. The states process applications, determine eligibility, distribute benefits, monitor eligibility and benefit levels, and provide a host of other services. As it turns out, how states certify applicants and recertify recipients is especially relevant for working families.

In *Food Stamps and the Working Poor*, a new book from the Upjohn Press, Peter Mueser, David Ribar, and Erdal Tekin examine detailed administrative data from three states—Georgia, Missouri, and South Carolina—and find that state rules and regulations often deter eligible low-income workers from receiving benefits while presenting hurdles for those who are already eligible to recertify for benefits.

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The authors begin by presenting the history, goals, and workings of the food stamp program and the role it plays in the nation's social safety net. They also discuss recent trends in food stamp caseloads, including participation rates, and the incidence of work among recipients. Not surprisingly, caseloads grew after the 2001 recession; however, they continued to climb despite the tightening job market of the middle 2000s. By FY 2007, some 8.6 percent of the U.S. population was receiving food stamps, compared to 6.1 percent in 2001, and the program cost the Department of Agriculture \$33 billion. The trend of growing caseloads then accelerated following the economic downturn that began in 2007. In 2012, expenditures on food stamps totaled \$89 billion, though that number declined to just under \$80 billion in 2017.

The effects of various certification and recertification policies are a key focus of the book, but the authors also discuss the impacts of the relaxed provisions that make it easier for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) to receive food stamp benefits. They also critique a variety of policy proposals to alter the program, and close with several their own proposals for making the program less onerous for working families and individuals while addressing valid program concerns.

Food Stamps and the Working Poor, by Peter Mueser, David Ribar, and Erdal Tekin, is published by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. June 2019. 138 pp. \$15.00 paperback ISBN 978-88099-660-0. Ebook 978-0-88099-662-4. Opinions expressed are solely those of the authors. We encourage you to request a review copy of this book. Contact: Rich Wyrwa.

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