

# The Hidden Social Safety Net



A look at how child support payments compare to more traditional forms of family support

Almost one in four children are in the U.S. child support system



**23%** of children in **child support**

**9%** of children in **WIC**

**4%** of children in **TANF**

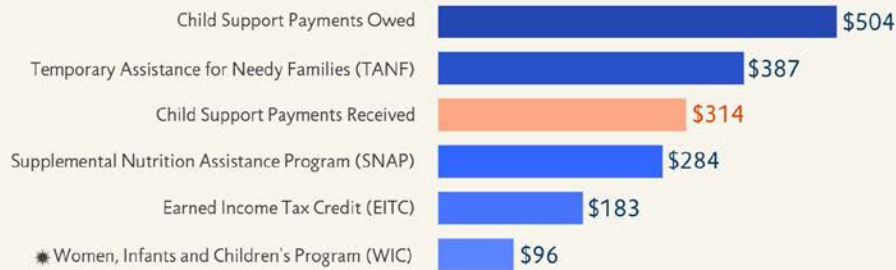
## How do child support payments help families?

- In FY2012, child support lifted nearly one million people out of poverty
- Child support payments reduce poverty more than TANF or WIC <sup>(2013)</sup>
- Among poor custodial parents who receive child support, the average amount received accounts for more than half of their average income <sup>(2011)</sup>

While not traditionally thought of as a social program, child support payments provide more support each month than SNAP/food stamps, WIC, or the Earned Income Tax Credit.



## Average Monthly Assistance per Family in 2011



If all child support obligations were paid and collected, they would provide families with more financial support per month than any other social program.

<sup>1</sup> FY2010, FY2011 & FY2013 Caseload Data and Financial Reports for TANF, WIC, SNAP, and the IRS. WIC data from "WIC Participant and Program Characteristics" 2010 & 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Child Support Enforcement. (2014). "History demonstrates child support lifts children out of poverty." Retrieved from Commissioner's Voice blog.

<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2013. Table 5a.

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, October). Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2011, Detailed Tables, Table 5.

<sup>5</sup> Calculated using FY2012 data

CITATIONS– CHILD SUPPORT: THE HIDDEN SOCIAL SAFETY NET

**Box # 1: “Almost one in four children are in the U.S. child support system”**

*Child enrollment numbers calculated by dividing official 2013 caseload data for each program by the total U.S. child population in 2013 as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau.*

United States Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. Office of Child Support Enforcement. (2014, April). FY2013 Preliminary Report - Table P-3. Retrieved from: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/fy2013-preliminary-report-table-p-3>

United States Department of Agriculture. Office of Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. (2015, April). WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) FY2013 Monthly Data – State Level Participation by Category and Program Costs. Retrieved from: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/WICAgencies2013ytd.xls>

United States Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. Office of Family Assistance. (2014, May). TANF Caseload Data 2013 – Total Children. Retrieved from: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/main/2013\\_children\\_tan.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/main/2013_children_tan.pdf)

United States Department of Commerce. U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, July). Current Population Reports. Table POP1. Child population: Number of children (in millions) ages 0–17 in the United States by age, 1950–2013 and projected 2014–2050. Retrieved from: <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables/pop1.asp>

**Box #2: “How do child support payments help families?”**

*Bullet 1:* United States Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. Office of Child Support Enforcement. (2014, February). History demonstrates child support lifts children out of poverty. Commissioner’s Voice blog. Retrieved from: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/blogs/voice/2014/02/05/history-demonstrates-child-support-lifts-children-out-of-poverty/comment-page-1/>

*Bullet 2:* United States Department of Commerce. U.S. Census Bureau. (2014, October). The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2013. Table 5a. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/demo/p60-251.pdf>

*Bullet 3:* United States Department of Commerce. U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, October). Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2011, Detailed Tables. Table 5. Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov/people/childsupport/data/files/chldsu11.pdf>

**Box #3: “Average Monthly Assistance per Family in 2011”**

*Calculations correspond to each program’s average benefit per family in the program.*

*Child Support Owed and Received:* United States Department of Commerce. U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, October). Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2011, Detailed Tables. Table 5. Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov/people/childsupport/data/files/chldsu11.pdf>. Note: Yearly benefit totals divided by 12 to reflect monthly averages.

*TANF:* United States Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. Office of Family Assistance. (2013, October). Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients, Fiscal Year 2011. Table 41. Retrieved from: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/appendix\\_fy2011\\_final\\_amend.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/appendix_fy2011_final_amend.pdf)

*SNAP:* United States Department of Agriculture. Office of Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. (2015, April). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Average Monthly Benefit Per Household. Retrieved from: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/19SNAPavg\\$HH.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/19SNAPavg$HH.pdf)

*EITC:* United States Department of the Treasury. Internal Revenue Service. (2014, October). Statistics for 2010 Tax Year Returns with EITC. Retrieved from: <http://www.eitc.irs.gov/EITC-Central/eitcstats/2010>. Note: Average credit divided by 12 to reflect a monthly average. The EITC accounts for family size and number of children when determining the amount of the credit, permitting the average tax credit to be compared with the average assistance received by family units in other programs.

*WIC:* United States Department of Agriculture. Office of Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. (2015, April). WIC Program: Average Monthly Benefit Per Person. Retrieved from: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/25wifavgfd\\$.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/25wifavgfd$.pdf); Johnson, B., et al. (2013). WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2012. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0010. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Retrieved from: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/WICPC2012.pdf>. Note: “Average number of household members receiving WIC benefits” calculated using weighted averages of each Region and State in Table E.14 of “WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2012”. The average number of household members receiving WIC benefits was then multiplied by WIC’s average monthly benefit per person in 2012 to arrive at the average monthly assistance per family.