

Report Snapshot: Mississippi Public Benefits Evaluation

Year-long evaluation of TANF, SNAP, Medicaid (Infants & Children), and Child Care Payment Programs

77%

Could Not Submit on First Attempt

4 of 100

Poor Families Receive TANF

~9,000

Children Lost Child Care

56%

Confused by Eligibility Rules

CORE FINDING: ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS, NOT ELIGIBILITY, DRIVE EXCLUSION

Across all four programs, procedural churn and documentation burdens account for most delays, denials, and program exits. Communication gaps, technology failures, and limited appeals support intensify these barriers and produce cascading effects on family stability, employment continuity, and child well-being.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

TANF

91% denial rate; 97.6% caseload reduction since 1996; \$260/month benefit for a family of three; large unspent reserves and documented misspending

MEDICAID (Infants & Children)

709,000 children covered; substantial denial rates in 2024; data navigation gaps; Mississippi ranked in the bottom tier for uninsured children

CHILD CARE (CCPP)

April 2025 suspension of new applications; ~9,000 children lost services; 16,000+ families waitlisted; minimal transparency on approvals/denials

SNAP

151,000 households served; only 65% of eligible residents and 35% of eligible elderly receive benefits; approval/denial data not publicly available

BENEFICIARY EXPERIENCE

Survey Findings (n=242)

- 22.8% submitted successfully on first attempt
- 19.4% unable to submit at all
- 48.8% found the process time-consuming
- 56% paid \$26-\$100 out of pocket for documents

Focus Group Themes (n=40, 5 cities)

- Online application failures and lost paperwork
- Gross income thresholds ignore take-home pay
- Repeated documentation across agencies
- Participants reported feeling dehumanized

"Data Darkness": State agencies declined to share denial data, demographic breakdowns, and processing metrics. A 60-day federal shutdown further limited data access.

SYSTEM-WIDE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS

Documentation Burdens

Communication Gaps

Technology Failures

Rural Access Barriers

Provider Shortages

Appeals Complexity

Procedural Churn