

# Return Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to Serve Its Originally Intended Population

SAVINGS IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2016-2020	2016-2025
\$12,000	\$12,000	\$11,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$13,000	\$14,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$59,000	\$125,000

## Heritage Recommendation:

Return Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to serve its originally intended population by ending SSI for children. This proposal would save \$12 billion in 2016, and \$125 billion over 10 years.

## Rationale:

SSI is designed to provide cash assistance to low-income disabled adults who are unable to work, and to the low-income elderly. The program also provides cash assistance to households with children who are functionally disabled and come from low-income homes.

The original intent of SSI was to provide cash assistance for adults who are unable to support themselves because of a disability or because of age. Low-income parents with a disabled child are eligible for cash assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, as well as for benefits from various other means-tested welfare programs, such as Medicaid and food stamps. Today, about 15 percent of SSI recipients are children.

SSI should focus on providing cash assistance to low-income adults who are unable to work, either because of disability or age. Cash SSI benefits for children should be eliminated. However, any medical expenses due to a child's disability that are not covered by another program, such as Medicaid, should be provided by SSI. Parents of children who are no longer receiving SSI cash benefits would continue to be eligible for a wide variety of means-tested welfare aid, including TANF, the Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps, and Medicaid.

## Additional Reading:

- Congressional Budget Office, "Options for Reducing the Deficit: 2015–2024," Option 12: Eliminate Supplemental Security Income Benefits for Children, November 2014, <http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/49638-BudgetOptions.pdf>.

## Calculations:

Savings based on 2014 CBO budget options, option 12, found in CBO, "Options for Reducing the Deficit: 2015 to 2014," <http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/49638-BudgetOptions.pdf>. CBO's projections go through 2024. We assume the same level of savings for 2025 as projected for both 2023 and 2024.