

Food

The Southern Rural Development Center addresses...

ASSISTANCE

Participation



Highlights of RIDGE-funded research in the Southern Region

Three studies weigh factors shaping participation in food assistance programs

State and federal policymakers have introduced significant changes to our nation's public assistance programs in recent years. In some cases, these policy changes have produced unexpected declines in food assistance program enrollments on the part of our nation's low-wealth population. In other cases, declining enrollments have been the product of other factors, such as limited access to human service agency offices by poor individuals/families, or aversion to the use of food assistance programs on the part of ethnic minorities. Understanding the factors impacting the food assistance participation patterns of poor adults and families in the South is an important avenue of research that the SRDC has supported as part of the RIDGE program.

The Arkansas Child and Adult Care Food Program: A Study of Factors Associated with Program Participation

Richard Huddleston and Yetunde Shobo
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Unlike other social programs such as the Food Stamp Program, access to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is heavily dependent on the decisions of providers to apply and participate in the program. The objective of this report was to study factors affecting providers' participation rates in the CACFP. A major finding was that many childcare providers did not know about the program, and some of those who were aware of the program did not know how to apply. The survey suggested that some eligible programs did not participate because they were overwhelmed by eligibility and participation rules and that outreach strategies are necessary to encourage greater participation in the program.

Public Assistance and Working Poor Families: Has the Nation Become More Like the Rural South?

Bradford Mills, Brian Whitacre and Christina Hilmer
Virginia Tech

This research study provides a comprehensive portrait of working poor families and their utilization of public assistance programs nationally, in rural America and in the rural South. The report looks at trends from 1982 to 2002, including such things as head of household's educational

level, erosion of well-being and the increasing diversity of working poor families. According to this study, efforts must be made to ensure that working families are not deterred from obtaining other forms of public assistance for which they are eligible. In addition, it suggests that policymakers should analyze the effectiveness of changes in assistance program accessibility needs so that other states can learn from the reforms and avoid indirectly restricting program access to working poor families.

Geographic Variation in Food Stamp and Other Assistance Program Participation Rates: Identifying Poverty Pockets in the South

William Hoyt and Frank Scott Jr.
University of Kentucky

This project directly examined the links among participation in the Food Stamp Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and looked at potential causes for the drop in food stamp participation in the late '90s. The results indicated that a strong relationship exists between the level of food stamp participation and both welfare and SSI participation. This suggests that food stamp and welfare enrollment rates are closely tied to one another.

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