



DATA SLICE #45

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The U.S. Must Invest More in the Child Care Subsidy Program

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The child care subsidy program, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), is funded through federal block grants to states. Compared to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), an entitlement program, receipt of TANF and child care subsidies is low among children. Using administrative data from Virginia in 2019, we find that SNAP outpaced child care subsidy and TANF receipt among all children under age 6 by factors of nearly 8 and 7, respectively. While Figure 1 shows total enrollment for all three programs increased as children aged from under 2 to 2-3, this increase was most dramatic for subsidies. However, use of child care subsidies remains very low relative to use of SNAP across all age groups. Given the eligibility overlap between SNAP and child care subsidies, our findings highlight the opportunity for investment in the child care subsidy program to reach more eligible families, such as that in the proposed [American Families Plan](#) and the [Build Back Better Act](#).

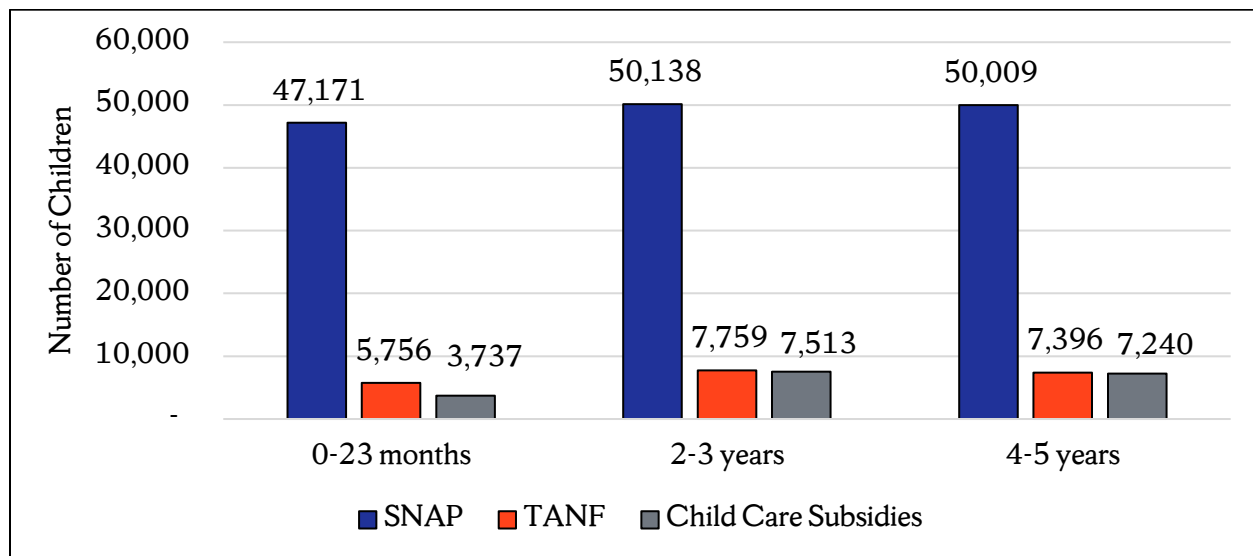


Figure 1: Number of Children Participating in SNAP, TANF, and Child Care Subsidies in Virginia by Age, 2019

Data Source: Virginia Longitudinal Data System, N=152,544, 2019.

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