Medicaid Generosity and Food Hardship Among Children

Abstract

- Explore between-state, over-time, and between household income eligibility criteria for households with children
- Find having a Medicaid eligible child reduces rates of household food insecurity and very low food security by 19% and 24%, respectively.
- Eligibility reduces rates of food insecurity among children by 20%
- Effects strongest for households headed by Black and Hispanic individuals, and households with children <6 years old.

Results

- Main specification-find having a Medicaid eligible child is associated with declines in every measure of food hardship (shown below)
  - Approx. 20% decline in the likelihood of each measure of food hardship
  - Statistically significant at 1% level
- Effect is large but within the scope of the literature
- Effects are strongest for households with young children and households that did not have the resources for dependable access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle
- Medicaid more generous for children, with more variation by state, year, child age, family structure
- Existing research has focused on ACA expansions of mid-2010s. Find reductions in food hardship,
  - Multiple measures of food hardship considered at household level:
    - Food insecure, very low food security, food insecure child, child with very low food security (assessed in Food Security Supplement, defined by USDA)
- Measure of eligibility based on household having eligible child.

Methodology

- Food security of the household and of the children in the household
- Income recorded in bins, use midpoint for eligibility determination
- Analyze households <380% FPL, highest eligibility threshold observed
- Main independent variable binary measure-Medicaid eligible child.

\[ \text{Food Hardship}_{i,t} = \beta_0 \text{Medicaid Elig. Child}_{i,t} + X \beta_2 + \delta_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \]

- Controls: state, survey year FE, demographics, income, SNAP, state economy. SE clustered at state level, survey weights used.

Conclusions

- This paper is part of an emerging literature on examining the effect of non-food support program on food hardship
- Use 2001-2020 December CPS to estimate impact of having a Medicaid eligible child on multiple measure of food hardship
- Medicaid eligibility reduces household food insecurity by 19%, very low food security by 24%, and both food insecurity among children and very low food security among children by 20%
- Effects are strongest for households with young children and households headed by non-White heads

References:


Contact: Nicholas Moellman, moellman@winthrop.edu; Cody Vaughn, cvaughn@uwla.edu