

For immediate release  
August 19, 2013

Contact: Wendy Patton, 614.221.4505  
[policymattersohio.org/safety-net-aug2013](http://policymattersohio.org/safety-net-aug2013)

## Safety net programs support working families in tough times

Program use is brief, targeted, requires work participation

Public assistance programs keep poverty at bay while supporting work participation, particularly for families with children. The Cato Institute's "Work Versus Welfare: 2013" starts from a flawed premise that families who draw on safety net programs do not work. The study ignores the new realities of the nation's public assistance programs:

- The share of poor families that receive TANF benefits, the starting point for the Cato analysis, is tiny. Most who receive assistance do so for short periods of time;
- All of the benefits included in the analysis go in part to working families;
- The vast majority of non-elderly, non-disabled safety net recipients live in households with adults who are attached to the labor force;
- A significant body of research shows that public benefits do not discourage work and demonstrates the positive benefits of the safety net.

### Public benefits help working families

- In Ohio, 55 percent of adults in Ohio Works First, the TANF cash assistance program, participate in the workforce.
- Half of Ohio's participants utilize cash assistance for a year or less.
- For every 100 Ohio families with children living in poverty, only 32 received TANF benefits.
- The weak economy isn't offering jobs that allow parents to support families: A single parent with two children working 22 hours per week at minimum wage qualifies for TANF.

### For more information

"Various Supports for Low-Income Families Reduce Poverty and Have Long-Term Positive Effects On Families and Children" at [www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3997](http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3997).

"Testimony of Robert Greenstein, President, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Before the Senate Budget Committee February 13, 2013" at [www.cbpp.org/files/2-13-13pov-test.pdf](http://www.cbpp.org/files/2-13-13pov-test.pdf).

"TANF Emerging from the Downturn a Weaker Safety Net" at [www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3915](http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3915).

###

*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute  
with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*