State Policy Design for SNAP and TANF Cash Assistance

User Notes and Data Documentation

November 2025

I. Introduction and Purpose

The objective of this document is to provide detailed guidance for users of the State Policy Design for SNAP and TANF Cash Assistance dataset. This dataset contains information collected to facilitate a multi-state and multi-dimensional approach to empirically capturing state policy design related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program. It contains state-level, policy-specific variables capturing information on eligibility and access characteristics which can be used to examine the relationship between program policy design and a variety of relevant topics related to the social safety net.

II. Scope and Content

A. Data Universe and Time Frame

There are 51 observations – one for each state and the District of Columbia. Moreover, the dataset contains 89 variables that cover various policy aspects of both TANF and SNAP. The data reflect policies and application procedures from calendar year 2019, which is the year of focus for our accompanying work (Gennetian et al. 2025a, Gennetian et al. 2025b). To access website content from 2019, we used the Wayback Machine.

B. Enhanced Data Collection for Select States

A specific subset of states was targeted for intensive, detailed data collection regarding specific administrative and implementation metrics. These states were selected because they are home to the majority of the Hispanic population in the United States, or experienced rapid Hispanic population growth over the last two decades. Data for variables unique to this effort were collected only for these Select States:

- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Louisiana
- Nevada
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Carolina
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Texas
- Washington

III. Data Sources

The final dataset is a composite product that includes information from several independent sources. Information on state-specific TANF policies came from the Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database, which catalogues selected state policy differences for TANF cash aid, including initial eligibility requirements, work and activity requirements, and ongoing eligibility and time limits. Information on state-specific SNAP policies is from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's SNAP Policy Database, which catalogs state-level policies relating to eligibility criteria, recertification and reporting requirements, and benefit issuance methods. These data were supplemented by data from Code for America's Benefits Enrollment Field Guide on online accessibility of applications, use of combined application processes, and the time required to complete the application. Finally, we also collected information about the availability of program information in Spanish, application and recertification requirements (including, e.g., request for SSN of household members), etc. via direct data collection from state TANF and SNAP websites. Table 1 below shows specific sources by variable.

Table 1: Data Sources

Variable name	Variable Label	Data source
tanf_all_asylee	Non-Citizen Eligibility: Non-Exempt Asylees (Pre-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_asyleepost	Non-Citizen Eligibility: Asylees After 5-Year Time Limit (Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_batteredpost	Non-Citizen Eligibility: Battered After 5-Year Time Limit (Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_batteredstate	Non-Citizen Eligibility: State Aid for Battered Within 5-Year Time Limit (Ineligible for Federal Funds, Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_deporteepost	Non-Citizen Eligibility: Deportees After 5-Year Time Limit (Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_gpincomecount	Eligibility: Grandparent Income Included in Benefit Computation	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_hlscreen	Health Screening Compliance Requirement	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_immreq	Immunization Compliance Requirement	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_incomeparentexcl	Eligibility: Excluded Parent Income due to Immigration Status	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_issuebenefit	Benefit Issuance through EBT (or EPC)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_lpr	Non-Citizen Eligibility: Non-Exempt Lawful Permanent Residents (Pre-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_lprpost	Non-Citizen Eligibility: Lawful Permanent Residents After 5-Year Time Limit (Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database

tanf_all_lprstate	Non-Citizen Eligibility: State Aid for Lawful Permanent Residents Within 5-Year Time Limit (Ineligible for Federal Funds, Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_noncaretaker	Eligibility: Non-caretaker Adult Eligible for Benefit	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_noncaretakerinc	Eligibility: Non-caretaker Adult Income Included in Benefit Computation	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_nonparent	Eligibility: Inclusion of Non-parent Caretakers in Unit	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_nonqualstate	Non-Citizen Eligibility: State Aid for Non-qualified Within 5-Year Time Limit (Ineligible for Federal Funds, Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_nonrelativecarechild	Eligibility: Children Living with Non-relative Caretakers Eligible	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_paroleepost	Non-Citizen Eligibility: Parolees After 5-Year Time Limit (Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_paroleestate	Non-Citizen Eligibility: State Aid for Parolees Within 5-Year Time Limit (Ineligible for Federal Funds, Post-PRWORA)	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_schlreq	School Requirement	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_all_wrkreqp	External Work Requirement for Parents due to Immigration Status	Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database
tanf_accom	Provision of Specific Needs Accommodations (e.g., phone help, interpreters, modifications)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_allssn	Assistance Unit Social Security Number Requirement for All Members	Copy of 2019 Application
tanf_appssn	Applicant Social Security Number Requirement	Copy of 2019 Application
tanf_combapp	Multi-Program Application Form	Code for America: Bringing Social Safety Net Benefits Online
tanf_docprov	Supporting Documentation Requirement	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_govshare	Government Agency Information Sharing	Copy of 2019 Application
tanf_imshare	Immigration Agency Information Sharing	Copy of 2019 Application
tanf_incomeverif	Income Verification Requirement	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_infohouse	All Household Members Information Requirement	Copy of 2019 Application
tanf_interv	Interview Requirement	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_monthrecertif	Recertification Frequency	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites

tanf_onlineapp	Online Application Option	Code for America: Bringing Social Safety Net Benefits Online
tanf_recertif	State Recertification Requirement	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_spaapp	Spanish Availability: Application Form (Online)	Copy of 2019 Application
tanf_spamarkt	Spanish Availability: Outreach / Marketing Materials (Online)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_spanot	Spanish Availability: Notice Indicating Application Form Availability (Online)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_spaproginfo	Spanish Availability: Program Information (Online)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
tanf_timecomplete	Application Completion Time (Minutes)	Code for America: Bringing Social Safety Net Benefits Online
snap_all_abawdwaiver	Able-Bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) Time Limit Waiver	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_bbce	Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_callcenters	Support Call Centers (SCC)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_cap	Combined Application Projects (CAPs)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_childsupportdisqual	Child Support Disqualification Coding	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_compdisqual	Comparable Disqualification Criteria	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_drugdisqual	Drug Felony Exclusion Rule	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_ecf	Electronic File System	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_incmedtanf	Medicaid & TANF Income and Resource Alignment	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_jtproappmed	Application Co-Processing with Medicaid	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_jtpromed	Joint Processing with Medicaid	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_mobiletech	Mobile Technology Access	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_onlinecasemgmt	Digital Case Management (DCM)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_postprowincome	Treatment of Income & Deductions of Ineligible Non-Citizens (Post-PRWORA)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_preprowincome	Treatment of Income & Deductions of Ineligible Non-Citizens (Pre-PRWORA)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_reportreq	Reporting Requirements	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_shhc	Simplified Homeless Housing Costs (SHHC)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_simplifiedrep	Simplified Reporting: Certification Duration	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_tba	Transitional Benefits Alternative (TBA)	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_all_wrkreqdisqual	Work Requirement & Disqualification Rules	USDA's SNAP Policy Database
snap_accom	Provision of Specific Needs Accommodations (e.g., phone help, interpreters, modifications)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
snap_allssn	Assistance Unit Social Security Number Requirement for All Members	Copy of 2019 Application

snap_appssn	Applicant Social Security Number Requirement	Copy of 2019 Application
snap_combapp	Multi-Program Application Form	Code for America: Bringing Social Safety Net Benefits Online
snap_docprov	Supporting Documentation Requirement	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
snap_govshare	Government Agency Information Sharing	Copy of 2019 Application
snap_imshare	Immigration Agency Information Sharing	Copy of 2019 Application
snap_incomeverif	Income Verification Requirement	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
snap_infohouse	All Household Members Information Requirement	Copy of 2019 Application
snap_interv	Interview Requirement	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
snap_monthrecertif	Recertification Frequency	Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center's State Policy Roadmap
snap_onlineapp	Online Application Option	Code for America: Bringing Social Safety Net Benefits Online
snap_recertif	State Recertification Requirement	Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center's State Policy Roadmap
snap_spaapp	Spanish Availability: Application Form (Online)	Copy of 2019 Application
snap_spamarkt	Spanish Availability: Outreach / Marketing Materials (Online)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
snap_spanot	Spanish Availability: Notice Indicating Application Form Availability (Online)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
snap_spaproginfo	Spanish Availability: Program Information (Online)	Wayback Machine: State Agency Websites
snap_timecomplete	Application Completion Time (Minutes)	Code for America: Bringing Social Safety Net Benefits Online
admin_index_tanf	Administrative Burden Index: TANF (Raw)	Created by Authors
admin_index_snap	Administrative Burden Index: SNAP (Raw)	Created by Authors
cost_min_index_tanf	Cost Minimization Index: TANF (Raw)	Created by Authors
cost_min_index_snap	Cost Minimization Index: SNAP (Raw)	Created by Authors
admin_index_tanf_z	Administrative Burden Index: TANF (Normalized)	Created by Authors
admin_index_snap_z	Administrative Burden Index: SNAP (Normalized)	Created by Authors
cost_min_index_tanf_z	Cost Minimization Index: TANF (Normalized)	Created by Authors
cost_min_index_snap_z	Cost Minimization Index: SNAP (Normalized)	Created by Authors

IV. Data Processing and Coding Conventions

A. Missing Data

Due to the data collection strategy for the Select States, a specific code was applied to differentiate between *systematically uncollected* data and standard missing values. As usual, standard missing values are depicted by an empty cell in the .csv file.

- **Code 999:** For variables that were only collected and measured within the Enhanced Subset of states, observations from all other states (i.e., not part of the Select States subset) have been explicitly coded with the value 999. This code indicates that the observation was not included in the intended sample for that specific variable. Users should consider this when conducting statistical analysis.

B. Policy Indices

As part of our accompanying work, *State Policy Design Administrative Burden and Cost Minimization Indices for SNAP and TANF Cash Assistance*, we create a set of policy indices that may be used to assess the relationship between policy design and program take-up, as well as beneficiary outcomes. The coding for these indices follows the Administrative Burdens Framework and the Cost Minimization Framework. We include these Policy Indices in this dataset but provide no code to replicate to them. Additional details, as well as the coding guidelines that we used to create these indices, can be found in the Appendix of Thomson et al., (2025).

V. Data Dictionary

The Data Dictionary, which is provided as a separate file provides a complete inventory of the variables in the State Policy Design for SNAP and TANF Cash Assistance dataset.

If you have any questions regarding this dataset or any associated materials, please reach out to Prachi Shukla at prachi.shukla@duke.edu.

VI. References

Code for America. (2019). *Bringing social safety net benefits online*. Code for America. https://www.codeforamerica.org/features/bringing-social-safety-net-benefits-online/

Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center. (2020). *Prenatal-to-3 State Policy Roadmap 2020: Building a strong and equitable prenatal-to-3 system of care*. Child and Family Research Partnership, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin. http://pn3policy.org/pn-3-state-policy-roadmap

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The Welfare Rules Database. Urban Institute. Retrieved September 2023, from https://wrd.urban.org

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