



Many working low-income families access childcare subsidies but fewer of these access other economic self-sufficiency programs

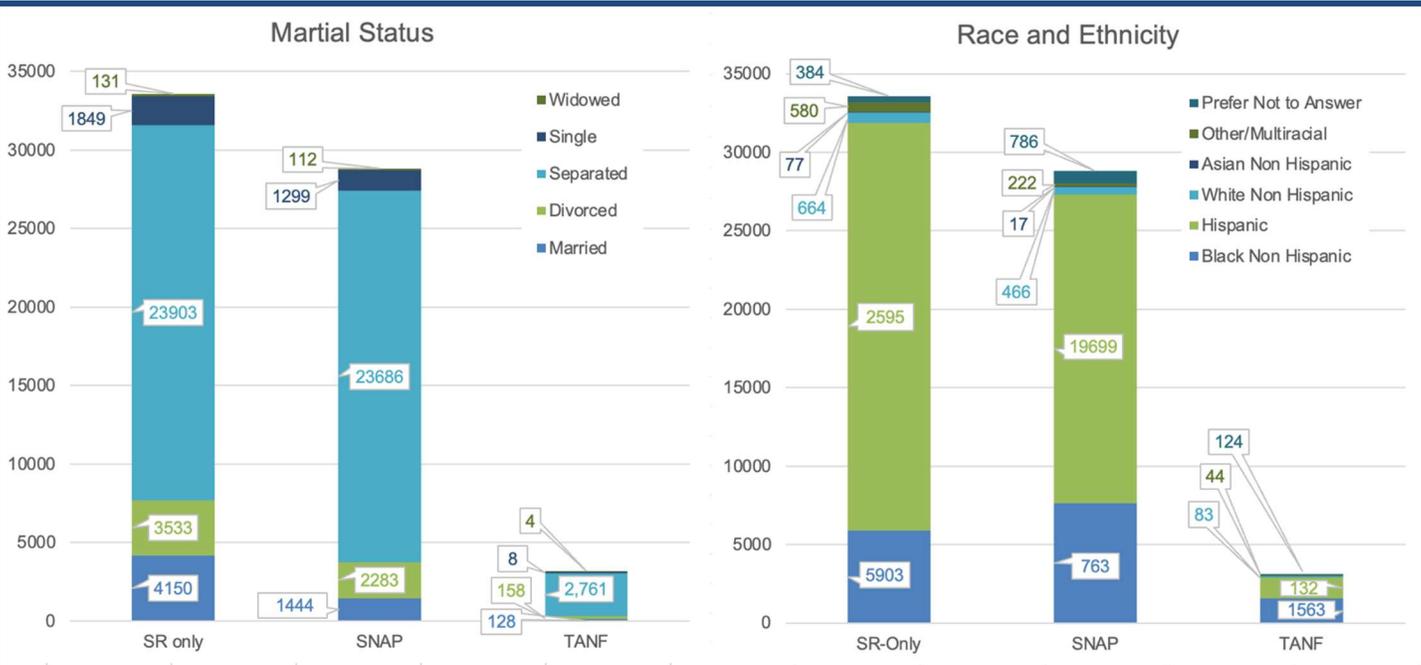
Florida’s School Readiness (SR) program helps Miami-Dade families with young children to access formal childcare programs. SR funding comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services via the Florida Division of Early Learning and is distributed through local Early Learning Coalitions. Households qualifying for SR may also be eligible for other financial assistance programs. This brief uses mixed methods to examine how many of Miami-Dade’s SR households access other forms of federal financial assistance, breaking down the demographics of parents in these households and highlighting some of their experiences.

Most households with School Readiness did not access nutrition, cash assistance, or housing services over the same years. From 2019 to 2022, a total of 62,373 households in Miami-Dade County were awarded SR funding for at least one child. While receiving SR in those years, most households (38,788 or 62%) did not access federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Housing Assistance. Of the remaining 23,585 households, SNAP was the most commonly accessed additional service; TANF and Housing Assistance were accessed at much lower rates (see charts). 9,306 households received SR plus two or more services. It should be noted that SR funding does not come with wraparound services to help parents access other benefits, unlike the federally funded Early Head Start and Head Start programs.

The chart below breaks down characteristics of parents with SR only or in combination with SNAP or TANF. SR recipients with housing services are a very small group and are not broken down.

School Readiness (SR) in Miami-Dade: Demographics of top services used

For all parents who received SR between 2019 and 2022, these charts show demographic variations for caregivers with SR only (N=33,566) or in combination with SNAP (N=28,824) or TANF (N=3,134); housing (N=97) is excluded.



Access to multiple services: The mixed methods research approach

Why do so few eligible parents with School Readiness (SR) access other family support services? Our analysis of service usage for SR recipients incorporated mixed methods, including interviews with parents and provider systems, to be addressed in a companion brief. Selected excerpts below from parent interviews illustrate how services may be viewed, and an excerpt from a companion infographic shows how few households accessed two or more other services along with SR.

SNAP nutrition assistance

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

"I don't think they consider enough, like all the people's bills... everything is high. Gas is high, food is high, rent is high. So, because a person makes a certain amount...just as it's coming in, [it's] going out."

"If I don't have enough money for my bills... I don't want to make it [an] option where it's either the bills or providing food for my kids."

TANF cash assistance

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

"My mom, my mom got all those benefits. I was the child that said I was gonna never be on welfare, and I was the child, probably the second one out of a bunch on welfare."

"Once we separated, they was asking a lot and requiring a lot... So it made the situation a little bit difficult because of him. It was just a lot of things for him. I was trying to take him off."

Housing assistance

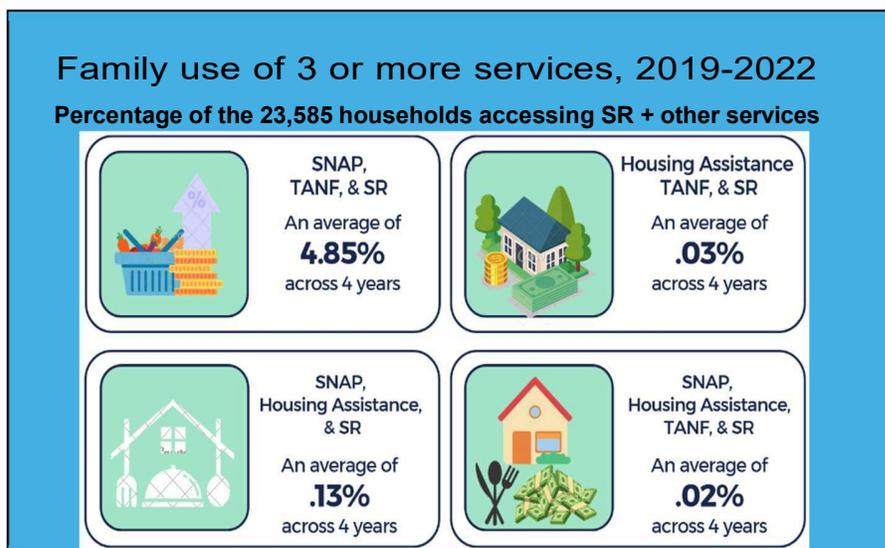
Section 8 or other public housing

"I received a letter a couple of months ago, saying that I was finally on a waiting list. But I'm 2,000 [or] 3,000 something person. So I don't even look at it."

"I've signed up for Section 8 since I was probably like 22, and I'm 43. Never was called. a single parent, I've been a single parent since my daughter was born, and she's 26."

Combined services

"We would apply if we needed it, and we would not apply because we think, well, it is something personal, there are a lot of people that do not need those benefits and they use it. So, we have to be the example that if you do not need it do not use it, and if you can live without that help then do it."



RECOMMENDATIONS

Fewer than half of SR-eligible families in Miami-Dade accessed SNAP at any point over a 4-year period, and far fewer accessed other federal financial assistance programs. Future research should identify why parents are accessing additional programs at such low rates. Research should also examine whether there is a relationship between SR policies and family structure, as the SR system over this 4-year period served 82% of recipients who are separated or divorced versus only 12% who reported being married.

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