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**CHILDREN**

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# 2026 Federal Policy Landscape:

*A Focus on Children, Youth, and Families*

Children Advocacy Days 2026

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# FIVE AREAS OF IMPACT

Recent federal legislation enacted will impact policy across five key areas impacting children and families nationwide.



## Medicaid & CHIP

~\$1 trillion in reductions  
11.8M projected to be impacted



## SNAP & Nutrition

\$187B in reductions  
Introduction of state cost-sharing



## Early Childhood

Modest increase in funding  
5 Head Start regional offices closed



## Child Welfare

Title IV-E maintained  
Upstream pressures increase

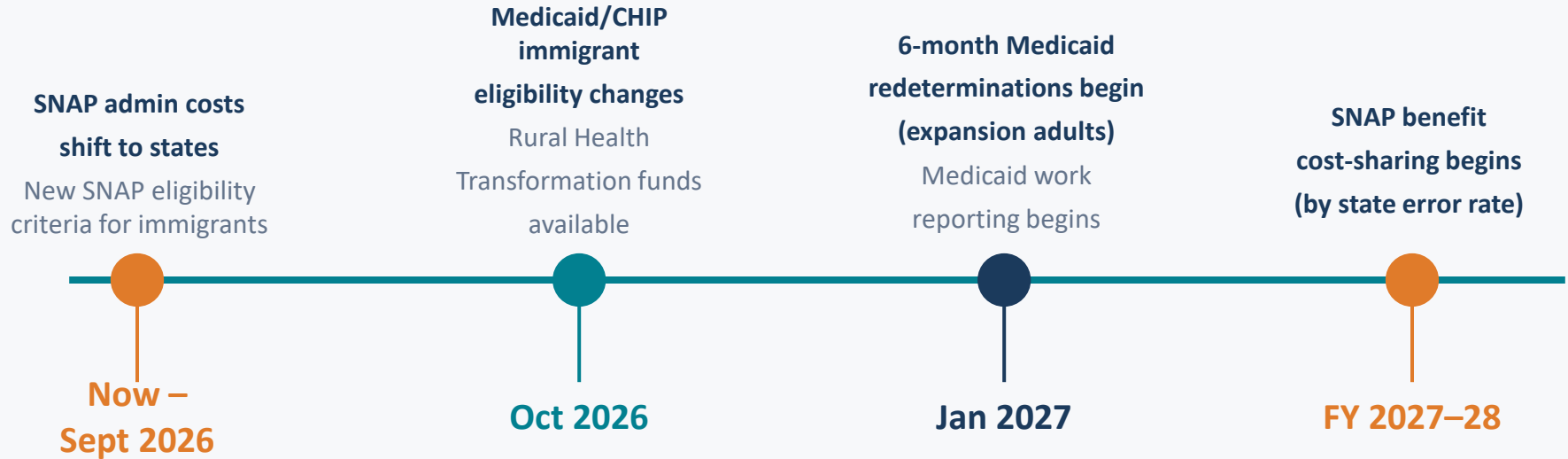


## Tax Policy

Tax credit stabilized (no rollback)  
CTC: 19M children do not qualify for full credit

# Implementation Timeline

Key dates for state decision-makers



Dates subject to state implementation decisions and potential legal challenges. Work requirement deadline: Dec 31, 2026 (states may request delay through 2028).

# State Decision Points

Leadership opportunities ahead

## KEY DECISIONS

- ✓ Adopt ICHIA option to preserve children's Medicaid & CHIP coverage
- ✓ Request Medicaid work requirement delay through 2028
- ✓ Invest Rural Health Transformation Program funds (\$50B available 2026–2030)
- ✓ Understand and assess SNAP error rates and cost-sharing exposure
- ✓ Create or expand state Child Tax Credit

## WHAT STATES ARE DOING

- 🔑 **Child Tax Credits:** 17 states now have state CTCs — including GA launching in 2026
- 🔑 **Paid Family Leave:** Multiple states expanded paid family leave in 2025–2026
- 🔑 **Child Care Access:** NM: free child care regardless of income; CT: \$300M dedicated endowment
- 🔑 **Medicaid:** States requesting waivers & 12-month continuous eligibility for children
- 🔑 **Rural Health:** States applying for Rural Health Transformation Program funds