



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

Six ways budget cuts could impact kids

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As House leadership wrangles with itself over the contours of a budget proposal, one thing is clear: Cuts are coming. Members have floated proposals that would return spending to FY 2022 enacted levels (i.e. not including pandemic funding) or could go even deeper. Vows to leave Social Security and Medicare unscathed put just about every other program in the legislature's sites. Once again, children are likely to bear the brunt of draconian measures.

Here are Six Ways Budget Cuts Could Impact Kids

1. Hunger: If levels are cut back to FY 2022 enacted, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) would lose as much as \$1.4 billion. [The program, projected to serve 6.5 million mothers and children in FY 2024, will be forced to waitlist participants, cutting nearly 250,000 off from benefits.](#) Deeper cuts would only allow the program to support about 5.07 million moms and babies — about 1.2 million fewer than the FY22 monthly average.

2. Housing: A return to FY 2022 enacted levels would cut the Department of Agriculture's rental assistance program by \$325 million. The Rental Assistance Program helps eligible low-income tenants in USDA-financed multi-family housing pay no more than 30% of their incomes for rent and currently serves approximately 288,000 tenants. [The House leadership's planned reduction would cause between 40,000 and 63,000 current recipients to lose rental assistance.](#) The average annual income of families and individuals receiving rental assistance (generally female-headed households, elderly, and the disabled) is approximately \$12,501.

These cuts would also [reduce benefits under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\) from \\$529 to \\$501](#) (just over half the amount needed to heat the average home with natural gas and less than 25% of the amount needed to heat the average home with heating oil). [Nearly 260,000 households would lose benefits](#), leaving these households dangerously unable to heat their homes.

3. Education: A reduction to the FY 2022 enacted level would cut funding from multiple programs. Low-income students and students with disabilities [would lose 13,000 teachers](#). Deeper cuts would remove as many as 60,000 teachers from classrooms.

4. Child Care and Early Education: Young children would take a huge hit under these cuts. Roughly [170,000 Head Start slots would disappear](#) with funding rolled back to FY 2022 enacted levels, disadvantaging low-income kids.

Roughly [105,000 child care slots would also vanish](#), adding to the nation's child care crisis and preventing these parents from participating in the workforce.

5. Mental Health: Sharp reductions in funding would cut responses by the 988 Suicide Crisis Lifeline, [stranding nearly 1 million people in the midst of a suicide, mental health or substance use crisis](#).

6. Youth Justice: Rolling funding back to FY 2022 enacted levels would [hinder reforms to the youth justice system, dropping awards to states and localities by roughly 35%](#) and endangering progress on programs that have been shown to aid at-risk youth and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the system.



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