



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

Shutdown 2023: What kids will lose

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As Congress careens toward a government shutdown that would begin just after midnight on Saturday, we're thinking about what it means for kids. **Here's what you need to know:**

Duration matters: While there could be immediate impacts of a short-term shutdown the degree of pain hinges on the length of the shutdown – the longer the shutdown, the more harm to children.

Not all programs are created equal: The “what happens next?” is complex because federal agencies have different options and plans under a government shutdown. Some departments or agencies may have reserve funds or additional revenue from fees. Others may be “forward funded” (they get their money in advance) like many education programs, so they have had their funding for months.

Food, nutrition and hunger: Children represent nearly half of all participants in the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, which provides direct financial assistance to low-income households to buy food. The Department of Agriculture (USDA), which runs the program, will be able to fund SNAP through October, but if the shutdown lasts more than a month, SNAP will be forced to stop providing benefits. The outlook is a bit more bleak for the **Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**, which provides [6.3 million low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding women and children under the age of 5 with fresh fruits and vegetables as well as other high-nutrition foods](#). In a shutdown, USDA will be able to fund WIC for a day or two depending on levels of contingency funding. After that, states will be on their own to take up the slack. Without the urgent investment of additional funds, according to the National WIC Association, state WIC offices could be forced to consider [waiting lists for prospective participants — a drastic step not seen in nearly 30 years](#).

Education: Schools receive federal funding for the year in advance, so most school districts will not see an immediate impact. **But roughly 10% of the nation's schools receive “impact aid,” which helps schools on federal property — such as military bases — replace the revenues (i.e. taxes) that other communities raise on their own. [The share of federal spending on impact aid is already down 6% from 2018, according to the](#)**

[Children's Budget 2023](#), and these districts could feel the cuts immediately. The U.S. Department of Education also will be forced to furlough staff until the government reopens, disrupting assistance to school districts. During the last shut down in 2018, the Department estimated that **a delay in its obligations and payments beyond one week would severely curtail the cash flow to school districts, colleges and universities, and vocational rehabilitation agencies** that depend on the Department to support their services.

Early Head Start and Head Start: Early Head Start and Head Start programs across the country operate on different funding schedules, so the impact of a shutdown will vary for the 820,000+ young children who participate in the program and the professionals who staff it. However, [10 Early Head Start and Head Start programs serving 10,000 children across the country would be impacted immediately](#) in the case of a shut down, and should a shutdown drag on for additional days, weeks, and months, that number will increase dramatically. The impact could mean closed classrooms, job losses, and families stuck without care for their children.

Health care: Federal funds support [more than 1,400 community health centers](#) serving low-income and rural communities — especially uninsured and immigrant populations — nationwide. **In 2021, these centers served roughly 8.6 million children. Without the certainty of funding, these centers could be forced to reduce staff hours or lay off workers, curtail hours of operation, or cut back on services such as dental and mental health care to stay afloat until the funding is authorized.** The longer a shutdown lasts, the worse the reductions get. This shutdown looms as the expiration of pandemic-era protections have disenrolled millions from Medicaid, which makes up [around 40% of these health centers' revenue](#).

Poverty: The [nearly 3 million Americans who receive benefits through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) — [more than 70% of them children](#) — could suffer if the federal portion of TANF funding is not renewed. During the government shutdown of 2013, states were temporarily [forced](#) to pay the federal portion of TANF benefits. **Whether or not children receive TANF assistance during a shutdown will depend on their state's policy choices. NOTE:** Many states have a less than satisfactory record on [the way they spend TANF funds](#). We're looking at you, [Mississippi](#).

And speaking of child poverty...

Some members of Congress and assorted voters apparently still care about it.

The hashtag [#EndChildPoverty](#) was trending last week on Twitter (sorry, X), as **more than 50 organizations and nearly a dozen members of Congress** discussed ways to solve the completely solvable problem.

One of those ways: Lawmakers recently introduced the [Child Poverty Reduction Act of 2023](#), which would commit the nation to **cutting child poverty in half in five years** and hold Congress accountable for reaching that goal.

The bill comes on the heels of U.S. Census figures that show [child poverty more than doubled in 2022 to 12.4%](#). Expiration of the expanded child tax credit and other assistance played a major role in returning child poverty to its previous levels, with 9 million children in poverty in 2022.



Child Poverty Action Group - USA

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#EndChildPoverty is now Trending nationwide!

Congress, you move.

Trending in United States
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