

The Republican Shutdown Harms Families, Jeopardizes Seniors and People with Disabilities

The **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** is the largest federal agency responsible for \$126.1 billion in federal discretionary assistance through services that improve the quality of life for Americans. The programs under HHS provide health care services, help seniors pay for heating during the winter, and support individuals with disabilities.

Rather than work to protect services that keep Americans healthy, HHS took the shutdown as an opportunity to fire hundreds of HHS civil servants who are the administrative backbone of these critical programs.

As House Republicans continue with their taxpayer funded month-long vacation and the Trump Administration dismantles federal agencies, Americans face losing essential services that keep their heads above water in the face of rising costs for food, energy, and health care:

Programs that Support People with Disabilities:

- **The Administration for Community Living (ACL)**—[proposed for elimination](#) by the Trump Administration—directs roughly \$500 million to support people with disabilities. ACL personnel [were already cut in half](#) prior to the shutdown, and now, during the shutdown, just 22 staff members remain. Many of the programs funded through ACL have access to carryover funds from FY 2025 and have not yet been forced to cease operations. However, some Centers for Independent Living and at least one Protection and Advocacy Agency have experienced a lapse in funding and have begun to [furlough](#) staff. If the Republican-led shutdown continues and these programs run out of funding, disabled Americans will not have access to programs that support their independence, such as Protection and Advocacy programs that investigate abuse and neglect and *Assistive Technology Act* programs that enable people with disabilities to live independently in their communities.

Programs that Support Seniors and Their Families:

- **The Administration for Community Living (ACL)** provided \$2.37 billion in FY 2024 to support a nationwide network of state and local agencies that support the dignity, independence, health and safety of older Americans. Unlike programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, which receive mandatory funding and are less impacted by lapses in funding, *Older Americans Act* programs that provide services to support older adults, and their families may be affected. As the shutdown continues, millions of seniors and their families may lose access to services like Meals

on Wheels, transportation to get to doctors' appointments, respite care, home and community-based care, and mental health supports as these programs run out of money.

Programs that Support Communities:

- The **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)**—proposed for elimination by the Trump Administration help low-income working families cover utility costs and improve communities. The Trump Administration has also fired staff at the Office of Community Services (OCS) at HHS, which oversees both programs. It is unclear whether any staff remain at OCS to administer either program.
 - **The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**—proposed for elimination—by the Trump Administration funds nearly [1000 Community Action Agencies \(CAAs\)](#), which are community-based organizations charged with assisting [10 million low-income individuals and families](#) to alleviate the conditions of poverty. CAAs leverage federal, state, local and private sources of funding to tailor services to meet the needs of individuals in their communities. They provide the gateway to a number of federal services, including the LIHEAP and Head Start programs. Should CAAs have to close their doors in the coming weeks, millions of individuals, including seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans, will lose access to critical programs like LIHEAP, Head Start, and other services intended to improve the quality of life.
 - **The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** assists eligible households with heating and cooling costs, which are on the rise. While states are currently relying on remaining FY 2025 funds to continue assisting households with their utility bills, there may be delays in states receiving FY 2026 funds once the shutdown ends, due to the prior Reduction in Force (RIF) of staff in April. Staff are responsible for responsible for distributing funds to states and providing additional programmatic support. The lack of staff to administer the program is especially concerning, as [electricity prices have increased by nearly 10 percent](#) since the beginning of the year, and [energy costs are expected to increase by nearly 8 percent](#) this upcoming winter.

Programs that Support Kids and Parents:

- **Head Start** is a comprehensive service program that promotes the school readiness of young children from birth to age five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Head Start and Early Head Start provide early learning alongside vital health and development screenings, service referrals, and support for parents. Currently, six programs in three states serving [6,525 children](#) are operating without federal funding and using emergency local resources to stay open in the absence of FY 2026 funding. By November 1, an additional [134 programs](#) across 41 states and Puerto Rico, serving 58,627 children, will similarly face imminent closure due to lack of federal funds. In the near term, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program, unlike Head Start, will be able to maintain funding.