

Who's watching the children?

How the federal sequester will impact Monroe County's youth

[May 7, 2013 - Draft - updated regularly]

The federal sequestration that took effect on March 1 initiated across-the-board cuts to many federally-funded programs and services. The most publicized impact was on air travel, but the sequestrations' negative effects have been felt more deeply by Americans who are far more vulnerable - our children.

The facts: The sequestration agreement signed by Congressional leaders and President Obama in 2011 calls for \$85 billion in automatic budget cuts that began to take effect March 1, 2013.

The myth: The cuts have had sporadic impact and will be reversed before they touch real people's lives.

The reality: Head Start teachers are being laid off. Housing vouchers are not being offered. Fewer vaccines will be available. Students will not receive the help they need. Medical care is less accessible.

The reality is hitting the Rochester area, though there has been scant public discussion of its local impact. With this document, The Children's Agenda hopes to stimulate attention and initiate conversations that will bring to light how our already disadvantaged young people will be hurt by the sequester.

This document is by no means a comprehensive account of the impact of the cuts at the local, state or federal level. The Children's Agenda is well known for detailed policy and budget analysis and advocacy; we also at times will provide brief reports, such as this one, that are broader in scope. While this is not an exhaustive list of local sequester-related cuts, it is enough, we believe, to serve as a call to action.

The short-term nature of the sequester is deceiving; a year in the federal budget timeline is nothing, but a year in the life of a 4 year who will not have access to Head Start and thus will arrive at kindergarten unprepared has lifelong implications. She'll only be 4 once.

Rochester/Monroe County

Local Head Start programs

- Rochester's Action for a Better Community - \$680,000 cut
- VOA Children's Center (Lake Avenue)- \$55,000 cut

Housing

- The Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) is losing \$2.5 million dollars in rental assistance due to sequester cuts.
- Under the Section 8 program, people move into qualified apartments and RHA pays the rent. Current Section 8 residents will be protected; however, as vouchers are turned back in, more than 600 of them will not be redistributed. There are about 12,000 individuals on the wait list.
- RHA experienced a \$1.2 million loss in administrative aid – a 30 percent midyear cut.
- In April, the Rochester Housing Authority notified its 200 workers they will have to take 10-day furloughs between May and August. The furloughs will be staggered so half the staff will be off every other Friday.
- Monroe County, the City of Rochester, Irondequoit and Greece all face a 8.2% reduction in funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) programs

New York State

Housing

- Cuts to Section 8 rental assistance vouchers will affect 11,569 in New York. These vouchers limit the families' rent payments to 30 percent of their income. If they were abruptly expected to pay market rents, large numbers of these families will be forced out of their apartments, perhaps with nowhere to go.
- Although state estimates of the number of people losing homelessness assistance are not available, New York will lose \$11 million for housing and emergency shelter.
- New York State will face a 8.2% reduction in funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) programs.

Nutrition

- Nutrition assistance for 35,700 mothers, infants, and young children provided through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program will be cut.

Education

- New York State schools will lose approximately \$42.7 million in funding for primary and secondary education, putting around 590 teacher and aide jobs at risk. In addition about 70,000 fewer students would be served and approximately 120 fewer schools would receive funding.
- New York State schools will lose approximately \$36.3 million in funds for about 440 teachers, aides, and staff who help children with disabilities.
- Work-Study aid to 4,147 college students in New York is eliminated.

Child care

- Up to 2,300 disadvantaged and vulnerable children in New York State could lose access to child care, which is also essential for working parents to hold down a job.

Health

- In New York around State 7,170 fewer children will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and Hepatitis B due to reduced funding for vaccinations of about \$490,000.

Legal Services and the court system

Sequestration's cuts to the court system and to the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) would affect our most vulnerable New Yorkers— the poor, war veterans, domestic violence victims and families in crisis.

- LSC, which provides funding for civil legal assistance for the indigent, would see its budget drop \$29 million beyond the significant cuts it has already suffered in recent years.
- The proposed cuts to New York's federal courts could result in a 20 percent workforce reduction or staff furloughs of 25 days per person.
- Cuts to security would require cutbacks in court hours. Cuts to information technology could result in a drastic reduction in access to electronic records filing systems. Interpreters, naturalization ceremonies, supervision of individuals on probation and the ability of court employees to assist those seeking justice all would be limited.
- LSC funding in New York was cut 17 percent, or \$4 million, in 2012.
- New York's four federal district courts are all considered congested because their caseloads exceed the national average. These cuts would exacerbate the current congestion and could result in civil cases, many of which are critical to businesses.

Specific impact on New York communities :

- New York- North Shore Hematology Oncology has turned away 5,000 patients due to sequestration cuts to Medicare funding for chemotherapy drugs.
- Buffalo, NY- Chief U.S. District Judge William M. Skretny has temporarily suspended hearings for criminal cases on Fridays for the western district of New York. This, along with the federal public defenders facing furloughs, will most likely delay hearings for low-income defendants.
- Federal budget cuts will eliminate breast and cervical cancer screenings for more than 1,600 women in New York state.

United States

Education

- Title I education funds – Title I education funds would be eliminated for more than 2,700 schools, cutting support for nearly 1.2 million disadvantaged students. This funding reduction would put the jobs of approximately 10,000 teachers and aides at risk. Students would lose access to individual instruction, afterschool programs, and other interventions that help close achievement gaps.
- Special education (IDEA) – Cuts to special education funding would eliminate Federal support for more than 7,200 teachers, aides, and other staff who provide essential instruction and support to preschool and school-aged students with disabilities.
- Head Start - Sequestration will deny Head Start to 70,000 children nationwide this year
- Higher education - The impending cuts would deny Work-Study aid to 33,000 nationwide.

Mental Health

- Cuts to the Mental Health Block Grant program would result in over 373,000 seriously mentally ill adults and seriously emotionally disturbed children not receiving needed mental health services. This cut would likely lead to increased hospitalizations, involvement in the criminal justice system, and homelessness for these individuals. In addition, close to 8,900 homeless persons with serious mental illness would not get the vital outreach, treatment, housing, and support they need through the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program.

Child Care

- Cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care and Development Fund are expected to end child care subsidies for 30,000 children across the country.

Nutrition

- WIC - Assuming caseload and food price inflation projections do not change significantly, and that WIC will experience a 5.1% cut as a nonexempt non-defense discretionary program through sequestration, approximately 600,000 participants would be cut from the Program in FY 2013.

Employment and training

- Job training - Federal job training funds will be cut by more than \$160 million nationwide
- Unemployment - Workers who are among the long-term unemployed see an up to 9.4 percent cut in benefits, estimated at an average loss of \$400 for the rest of 2013.

Housing

- Rental assistance - The cuts about to take effect will take away rental assistance vouchers from between 110,000 – 125,000 families nationwide. These vouchers limit the families' rent payments to 30 percent of their income. If they were abruptly expected to pay market rents, large numbers of these families will be forced out of their apartments, with increasing homelessness a certainty.
- Homelessness - Sequestration will end housing assistance to approximately 100,000 formerly homeless people nationwide, including veterans.
- Home energy assistance - Home energy assistance will be cut an estimated \$180 million. Even without this cut, rising heating costs mean that aid under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is expected to average only \$375 per household served in 2013, down from \$405 in 2012.

After-school services

- Most of the one hundred federal funding streams that support afterschool and summer learning programs will be cut by 5.1 percent across the board and indiscriminately, including AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Title I education funding, Child Care Development Block Grant vouchers, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Community Services Block Grant. When the cuts become apparent will depend on the funding stream and whether or not the funding comes from FY2013 funds.
- For the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, it is now estimated that about 58,000 young people would lose afterschool and summer learning supports, likely beginning with the 2013-14 school year