The Colorado Health Foundation™



What does the government shutdown mean for Coloradans?

It’s day 28 of the longest standing partial shutdown of the federal government in U.S. history, and its impacts are hitting Coloradans hard. Of the many harsh realities rising to the surface is how the closure is making it harder for many Colorado families to keep health within reach.

Colorado is home to more than 220,000 Colorado families who are at risk of losing food benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). If the shutdown continues, the Colorado Department of Human Services anticipates additional strain on local food banks and social service agencies due to a spike in customers. And more than 15,000 furloughed federal workers missed a paycheck this last Friday as a result of the shutdown.

In the absence of a continuation of funding to several federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), several affordable housing and community development programs that support those living on low income are on the chopping block, leaving millions of Americans, including thousands of Coloradans at risk of losing their homes because they cannot afford their rent or mortgage.

And some of the most seriously impacted individuals are in Native American communities. Access to programs providing health care, education, public safety and senior care are being cut off for Native American populations across the U.S., including the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in southwest Colorado. Loss of these critical services means more Coloradans going without the primary and behavioral health care they need, which in some situations can be a matter of life or death.

As the shutdown continues, the consequences are showing up in a myriad of ways with no clear end in sight – from families forced to make impossible choices between missing rent payments and covering medical bills, to delaying needed health care or going without food. All of these impacts are making it harder to keep Coloradans healthy and thriving, and it is people living on low income who are impacted most.

These are real issues faced by real people – with stark consequences for the health and well-being of thousands of Coloradans.

Amidst the grim realities faced by too many Coloradans during this shutdown, people are stepping in to help. Earlier this week, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock announced a new temporary mortgage assistance program that will offer financial assistance to government workers experiencing changes in their employment status – whether that's furlough, layoffs or reduced work hours – for up to $5,000. And several businesses across the state are helping to ensure federal workers and their family's needs are met – ranging from free meals, health care and child care. Of the many organizations contributing, Food Bank of the Rockies opened emergency food sites to support federal workers and Coloradans who may start to lose their food assistance benefits across the Denver metro area.

Just last week, United Way has launched a new coalition, United for U.S., which is helping millions of furloughed Americans connect to local social services. The 2-1-1 non-emergency line offers callers from across the nation access to resources and aid to help support their monthly expenses during the ongoing shutdown. If you or someone you know is affected by the government shutdown, we encourage you to call 2-1-1 to see what resources are available near you.

At the Foundation, we believe everyone should have what they need to live a healthy life, and we are committed to making that a reality in our state. In partnership with Gary Community Investments, we are supporting the Colorado

Department of Human Services in their efforts to notify SNAP clients about the impact of the government shutdown on benefits and to help connect them with emergency food resources.

Our continued commitment to you is to keep our pulse on what's happening at the federal level and how it's impacting health equity and Coloradans' ability to keep health in reach here. We will continue to share what we're hearing about the government shutdown and resources that are becoming available to help Coloradans cope with the far-reaching impacts.

In addition, we ask that you pitch in to help support your fellow Coloradans by donating non-perishable food items to your local food bank or pantry. Together, we can help more Coloradans lead healthy lives.

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