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Head Start Closures in Ohio as Shutdown Drags On — 600 Children Affected, Thousands More at Risk

OHIO — As the federal government shutdown continues into its fifth week, the crisis is hitting Ohio's youngest children hard. Seven Head Start providers have exhausted their federal funds, forcing some to close and others to scramble to stay open. Programs in Highland and Scioto Counties have already shut their doors, affecting 600 children and 150 staff. The remaining five providers are operating on borrowed time—cobbling together donations, community support, and organizational reserves.

Head Start agencies in Coshocton and Allen Counties are scheduled to temporarily close in two weeks. Without congressional action to pass a full FY 2026 budget or a short-term continuing resolution, all seven providers face eventual closure - impacting 3,693 children and 940 staff and leaving working parents without the child care they rely on.

"Every day the shutdown continues, Ohio children and families are paying the price," Head Start isn't a political issue—it's a lifeline for working families. When classrooms close, parents lose child care, teachers lose paychecks, and children lose the consistent care and learning that set them up for success."

"This shutdown is pulling the rug out from under working families," said Julie Stone, Executive Director of the Ohio Head Start Association. "Parents are losing child care, teachers are losing paychecks, and children are losing the stable, nurturing environments that help them thrive. These are real people with real consequences—and Ohio's youngest citizens deserve better."

Head Start is a lifeline for families – it provides early learning, nutrition, health screenings, and family support services to low-income children from birth to five. When programs close, families lose access not only to education and care but also to essential meals, health services, and stability.

The Ohio Head Start Association is calling on Congress to act immediately to reopen the government, restore Head Start funding, and keep classrooms open for the children who need them most.

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