

# Trump Cuts Threaten Agency Running Meals on Wheels

A tiny division responsible for overseeing services for people with disabilities and older Americans is being dismantled as part of an overhaul by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the health secretary.



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By Reed Abelson

Published April 24, 2025 Updated April 30, 2025

Every Monday, Maurine Gentis, a retired teacher, waits for a delivery from Meals on Wheels South Texas.

“The meals help stretch my budget,” Ms. Gentis, 77, said. Living alone and in a wheelchair, she appreciates having someone look in on her regularly. The same group, a nonprofit, delivers books from the library and dry food for her cat.

But Ms. Gentis is anxious about what lies ahead. The small government agency responsible for overseeing programs like Meals on Wheels is being dismantled as part of the Trump administration’s overhaul of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Roughly half its staff has been let go in recent layoffs and all of its 10 regional offices are closed, according to several employees who lost their jobs.

“I’m just kind of worried that the whole thing might go down the drain, too,” Ms. Gentis said.

In President Trump’s quest to end what he termed “illegal and immoral discrimination programs,” one of his executive orders promoted cracking down on federal efforts to improve accessibility and representation for those with



disabilities, with agencies flagging words like “accessible” and “disability” as potentially problematic. Certain research studies are no longer being funded, and many government health employees specializing in disability issues have been fired.

The downsizing of the agency, the Administration for Community Living, is part of far-reaching cuts planned at the H.H.S. under the Trump administration’s proposed budget.

While some federal funding may continue through September, the end of the government’s fiscal year, and some workers have been called back temporarily, there is significant uncertainty about the future. And some groups are reporting delays in receiving expected federal funds.



Maurine Gentis of Victoria, Texas, who receives Meals on Wheels deliveries. “I’m just kind of worried that the whole thing might go down the drain, too,” Ms. Gentis said.

Mark Felix for The New York Times

“There’s a lot of confusion,” said Becky Yanni, the executive director of the Council on Aging in St. Johns County in Florida. She said she has been told that the most recent funding for its Meals on Wheels program and other services might be late.

If the funding does not arrive, “in a lot of communities, you will be looking at cuts in services,” said Sandy Markwood, the chief executive officer for USAging, which represents the network of area agencies of aging.

The community living division helps coordinate services and provide funding for older and disabled Americans so they can stay at home rather than live in a nursing home. With a budget of \$2.6 billion, the unit represents a minuscule fraction of total H.H.S. spending.

Under the reorganization introduced by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the community unit’s responsibilities will be divided among other agencies, including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Administration for Children and Families.

“This consolidation allows the department to better meet the current health needs of vulnerable populations across the country,” a spokeswoman for H.H.S. said in a statement. “This does not impact the important work of these critical programs as it will continue elsewhere within H.H.S.”

So far, several programs under the unit will be eliminated under the proposed budget, including one that provides ombudsmen in nursing homes, to help ensure the safety and welfare of residents, and respite care programs, to provide a break for those caring for an older person or person with disabilities. States would also have more latitude in determining where funds should be allocated.

In addition to meal deliveries, the community living agency supports numerous programs, including the nonprofit Centers for Independent Living, that are staffed by people with disabilities, who help older adults and others with disabilities move out of nursing homes and back into the community, and find services, like transportation and legal assistance.

Theo W. Braddy, the executive director for the National Council on Independent Living, which represents the centers and people with disabilities, said the uncertainty has upended planning.

“Everybody is on edge. We can’t tell them anything because we don’t know anything yet,” he said, adding that no one from the Trump administration or H.H.S. has attempted to contact the group with updates.



Taylor Miller, right, who is blind, with Andrea Kindseth of the LIFE Center for Independent Living in Bloomington, Ill., at his home. Kevin Serna for The New York Times



Rickielee Benecke, executive director of the LIFE Center in Bloomington, Ill. Kevin Serna for The New York Times

Advocates say the recent cutbacks have further marginalized older Americans and those with disabilities. “The bottom line is that people in charge simply don’t care about large swaths of the American people,” said Dr. Joanne Lynne, a clinical professor of geriatrics and palliative care at George Washington University.

“We have made living with disability and old age exceedingly unpleasant,” she said. “We are on course to make it virtually intolerable.”

Community groups like Meals on Wheels are bracing for significant cuts. In addition to the potential loss of funding from the Administration for Community Living, Republican lawmakers are proposing reducing grants to states that use

another stream of federal funding. The Trump administration and Republicans are also pushing for significant cuts to the Medicaid program, which provides health care coverage for low-income Americans.

“We’re concerned about a number of potential threats happening all at once,” said Josh Protas, the chief advocacy and policy officer for Meals on Wheels America, an association of the local nonprofits. About a third of the association’s local units already have waiting lists, he said, and lower funding would result in fewer meals for fewer people.



Dan Capone, president and chief executive of Meals on Wheels South Texas. Mark Felix for The New York Times

People who are 60 or older with low incomes, and who have difficulty preparing food for themselves, typically qualify for Meals on Wheels. The demand for services is increasing as food prices rise and more people need assistance. More than two million older Americans receive food deliveries each year, and many say they would have difficulty paying for meals without the program.

“Meals on Wheels is a godsend for me,” said Richard Beatty, a 70-year-old with poor vision and limited mobility living in Baltimore. He receives deliveries four times a week and isn’t sure how he would manage without the program.

If there are cuts in funding, the programs would have to make hard choices about who would be eligible for deliveries. “We would have to make drastic changes to who we were serving,” said Dan Capone, the chief executive of Meals on Wheels South Texas, which serves roughly 300 people a week, including Ms. Gentis. His group also receives private donations, with federal funds accounting for some 40 percent of the budget, he said.

The federal community unit under the ax also plays a key role in supporting disabled Americans, including older individuals.

“So much of the work we do is about giving people dignity in their lives,” said Karen Tamley, the chief executive of Access Living, a Chicago-based center, one of 400 across the United States.

The centers connect people with a variety of services, and offer job and skills training to young adults with disabilities. They may teach someone to drive, or help them find affordable housing.

The Administration for Community Living has helped organizations navigate the state and local bureaucracies responsible for doling out federal funds. When Mr. Capone wanted more clarity as to how Texas was distributing the money, he got in touch with the unit’s regional office in Dallas. “We just started building that relationship with the field office, and that field office is gone,” he said.

“It is frustrating on a practical level,” said Fay Gordon, one of the regional administrators who was let go earlier this month. “These programs are live and need direction.”



At Meals on Wheels South Texas, in the town of Victoria. Mark Felix for The New York Times

Some groups are not waiting before starting to take steps to reduce costs. Brittany Boyd-Chisholm, the chief executive of the Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania, said that more than half of her funding comes through the federal agency. She has asked all the managers, herself included, to take a cut in salary of between 5 and 10 percent and is weighing other actions. She said her center was already underfunded.

No one has provided her with any information about future grants, and her emails have not been returned. “It makes you feel completely on your own,” Ms. Boyd-Chisholm said.

Created under the Obama administration, the agency was intended to unify the work of three other agencies: the Administration on Aging, the Office on Disability and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

“These programs being together and working together was about efficiency and was about coordination,” said Alison Barkoff, the former acting administrator under President Biden, who stepped down last fall.

During the first Trump administration, at the height of the pandemic, the agency worked with the department’s Office for Civil Rights to ensure hospitals and doctors had clear guidelines so that if staffing fell short they wouldn’t deny care to those with disabilities.

“We had found common ground and issues to work on together,” said Daniel Davis, who worked for the agency’s Center of Policy and Evaluation, whose entire staff was laid off, according to former employees.

**Reed Abelson** covers the business of health care, focusing on how financial incentives are affecting the delivery of care, from the costs to consumers to the profits to providers.

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 15 of the New York edition with the headline: Overhaul Dismantles the Agency Running Meals on Wheels



## Proposed cuts put older adults at risk!

**Services for older adults and family caregivers are in danger of being reduced or eliminated.**

April 28, 2025



The Denver region's Area Agency on Aging serves Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin and Jefferson counties.

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## Introduction

It has come to our attention that a draft preview of the Trump Administration's FY 2026 Health and Human Services Budget will separate coordination and delivery of programs, and threaten key Older Americans Act services, including crucially important support such as:

- Home-delivered meals.
- Assisted transportation.
- In-home services to help older adults dress, bathe and do chores.
- Support, education, training and respite for family caregivers.

The recent Health and Human Services reorganization eliminated the Administration on Community Living. In early April, the administration proposed moving one of the Older Americans Act's coordinated and interconnected services — its meals program — to the Administration for Children and Families while assigning the rest of the Older Americans Act activities to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Denver Regional Council of Governments staff believe all Older Americans Act programs are a better fit for the Administration for Children and Families. The Older Americans Act created a comprehensive system of home and community-based options for older adults. Because Older Americans Act programs are community-based and cost-effective, they risk being lost among the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' complicated medically based programs.

The administration's draft budget also eliminates critical services and leaves older adults at risk of abuse, fraud and exploitation. For example, elimination of the Ombudsman program would remove support and protections for 23,000 vulnerable residents living in the Denver region's 500-plus nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

The administration's draft budget also proposes zeroing out the State Health Insurance Assistance program, which helps people navigate the complexities of benefit programs including Medicare, Medicare Advantage, veteran benefits and Medicaid. The program's



counselors help individuals choose, apply for Medicare programs, resolve payment issues, and investigate fraud complaints and inappropriate charges.

## **Critical issues require an urgent call to action**

### **Distribute fiscal year 2025 federal funding.**

Area agencies on aging have not received fiscal year 2025 federal dollars, and state funds are running out. If area agencies on aging don't receive federal funding soon, critical services to older adults will be reduced or halted.

### **Keep Older Americans Act programs together in the Administration for Children and Families.**

If, as the administration proposes, Older Americans Act programs are split across federal agencies, it will severely impair older adults' and caregivers' ability to access services that allow them to continue living at home and in their communities. Older adults who can't live safely at home run the risk of more costly, premature placements in institutional settings, raising costs for their families and taxpayers.

### **Preserve Older Americans Act programs scheduled to be eliminated.**

If the administration eliminates major initiatives such as the Ombudsman program and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, it puts older adults at risk of abuse, exploitation, illness, loss of independence and financial ruin.

## **About the Denver region's Area Agency on Aging**

The Denver Regional Council of Governments was designated as the Area Agency on Aging in 1974 and has been providing services to older adults in the eight-county region for more than 50 years.

The Denver region's is the largest of 16 area agencies on aging in Colorado. It provides a wide array of services, including:

- **Information and Assistance** to find programs and services for individual needs.
- **Home-delivered, congregate and medically tailored meals** to address hunger, malnutrition and social isolation, and promote good health.



- **Evidence-based health and wellness programs** to prevent falls and manage chronic disease.
- **Transportation** to get older adults to doctor's appointments, dialysis, the pharmacy and the grocery store.
- **In-home care** to support older adults' dignity, autonomy and reduce costs to Medicaid and Medicare.
- **Caregiver services** to support family caregivers by providing access to respite services, training and education. Family caregivers provide cost-effective care compared with equivalent government services, and prevent older adults from premature placement in costly assisted living residences or nursing homes.
- **Ombudsman** program staff who advocate for residents in nursing homes and assisted living residences. Ombudsmen are the only professionals who visit facilities regularly to monitor care, ensure residents' rights and advocate for residents' needs.
- **Benefits counseling** to help older adults and their caregivers understand and navigate Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, Social Security, veteran and other benefit programs.

The Denver region's Area Agency on Aging serves veterans through its Veteran-Directed Care program, which helps veterans of all ages at risk of institutionalization live at home with paid caregivers of their choice.

In 2022, the Denver region's Area Agency on Aging Community Care Hub was established to facilitate access to community-based services and address health-related social needs identified by health care providers. The hub improves health outcomes by providing recently treated patients with access to food, transportation, housing resources and other services.

The Older Americans Act enables and guides the work of area agencies on aging and provides funding for community organizations. Currently, the Denver region's Area Agency on Aging contracts with 33 community organizations to help administer Older Americans Act programs locally, including:



A Little Help	Carepool	Jewish Family Service
Aging Resources of Douglas County	Colorado Legal Services	Medride
Alpine Homecare	Colorado Visiting Nurse Association	City of Lakewood
Apollo Home Care Services	Denver Inner City Parish	Lyft
Arapahoe County	City and County of Denver	Project Angel Heart
Benefits in Action	Denver Health	Seniors Resource Center
Habitat for Humanity	Douglas County	Senior Support Services
City and County of Broomfield	FirstLight Home Care (Boulder, Denver, Parker)	Southwest Improvement Council
Brothers Redevelopment	Griswold Home Care	Regional Transportation District Pass Programs
Catholic Charities of Denver	HopSkipDrive	Uber
		Via Mobility Services

The Older Americans Act creates community resources for older adults to access a wide array of programs and services. Last year, the Denver region's Area Agency on Aging provided over **one million units of service** to more than 20,000 older adults.



**Table 1: Older Americans Act funded services in the Denver region**

Service type	Total service units
Adult Day Care/Adult Day Health	1,306
Assisted Transportation	84,293
Caregiver Counseling	587
Caregiver Information Services	315
Caregiver Respite	20,438
Caregiver Support Groups	2,488
Caregiver Training	697
Case Management	14,125
Chore	17,931
Congregate Meals	127,610
Counseling	14,518
Education	148,529
Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion	2,336
Grandparent Caregiver Counseling	324
Grandparent Caregiver Information and Assistance	2,817
Grandparent Caregiver Respite	1,211
Grandparent Caregiver Support Groups	528
Grandparent Caregiver Training	675
Home Delivered Meals	627,086
Homemaker	43,508
Information and Assistance	33,143
Legal Assistance	10,105
Material Aid	14,988
Personal Care	6,260
Reassurance	4,631
Screening	22,347
SNAP-Ed Fresh Conversations	138
Transportation	92,628
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,295,561</b>



[https://www.aspendailynews.com/news/pitco-to-cover-senior-produce-sharing-funding-gap-left-by-federal-cancellation/article\\_038914b6-a671-404d-8c5b-37f1d58ef258.html](https://www.aspendailynews.com/news/pitco-to-cover-senior-produce-sharing-funding-gap-left-by-federal-cancellation/article_038914b6-a671-404d-8c5b-37f1d58ef258.html)

# PitCo to cover senior produce-sharing funding gap left by federal cancellation

Josie Taris, Aspen Daily News Staff Writer  
Apr 21, 2025

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Chad Federwitz, senior services director with Pitkin County, talks with clients during lunch on March 13. He said that the community supported agriculture program, whose funding was recently cut by the USDA, helps connect seniors with programming.

Aspen Daily News file photo

Pitkin County will back a produce-sharing program for seniors this year after the federal government cut funding, but questions remain about long-term support.

The Pitkin Board of County Commissioners supported up to a \$50,000 allocation from the Healthy Community Fund to cover the shortfall at their Tuesday work session.

On March 10, the Colorado Department of Human Services informed the county that the U.S. Department of Agriculture canceled the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program.

The county utilized that program for the past seven years to purchase Community Supported Agriculture shares from Two Roots Farm to offer free organic produce to seniors, averaging 5-10 pounds of produce to 35-50 seniors weekly from May to October.



Chad Federwitz, senior services director, said they pool the shares into a farmer's market of sorts just before their daily lunches at the senior center, allowing clients to choose the produce they want.

“It has allowed us to kind of stretch those shares a bit to reach out to more older adults in our community who may need some of that produce,” Federwitz said during the work session. “We don’t know if, potentially next year, there might be additional grants or different funds that might be able to continue the program.”

Commissioner Patti Clapper emphatically supported the funding.

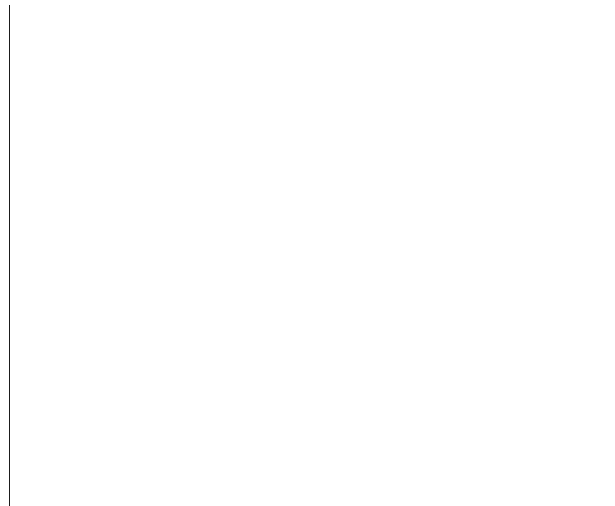
“I fully support this for next year, funding it at \$50,000 out of the Healthy Community Fund,” Clapper said, continuing “as long as we research other opportunities for funding in the future, and maybe go back to the federal government and asking them why they cut such an important program.”

Commissioner Greg Poschman agreed that supporting local producers and securing produce for seniors is a priority, but questioned the economics of the choice and whether using local dollars would discourage the federal government from returning to fund the

program.

“If we’ve got 50 adults served, and you’re asking for \$50,000, that’s \$1,000 per customer per year to operate this service,” Poschman said. “Question No. 1: Is there a more economical way to do this?”

County Manager Jon Peacock said that the one-year temporary funding solution is to ensure no disruption in services to the seniors and Two Roots — which leases land through the Open Space and Trails agricultural leasing program.



“We’re not getting much lead time on all of these decisions coming down from the feds,” Peacock said. “We may get this funding back. We may not.”

Poschman urged county staff to explore other partnerships or strategies to fund the program — like an economy-of-scale move with another provider. The Human Services Department recently switched its food pantry contractor to Harvest for Hunger from LiftUp.

“I don’t get the sense that you guys have really reached out and looked for other solutions. One of the reasons the feds are pulling funding away is because they want us to fund things locally that’s pretty clear, or not funding them at all,” Poschman said. “I don’t want it to go away, but I do think we need to respond to that by being nimble and and and frugal, quite frankly.”

Human Services is bracing for a major budgetary change in anticipation of Trump administration cuts to the federal government budget and will likely have to face many other funding priority decisions for its programs.

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**Josie Taris**

Reporter

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# Trump guts LIHEAP, threatening \$378M in energy assistance already approved by Congress

State energy assistance programs have funding to continue short-term operations, but the elimination of federal staff threatens the long-term stability of a popular program, experts say.

Published April 2, 2025



Robert Walton  
Senior Reporter

*U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., attends a Cabinet meeting at the White House on Feb. 26, 2025 in Washington, DC. Firings at the Department of Health and Human Services on April 1, 2025, included all staff of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Andrew Harnik via Getty Images*

Mass firings at the Department of Health and Human Services on Tuesday included all staff of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, a federally-funded initiative which helps vulnerable families afford their electricity and gas bills. Consumer advocates say the layoffs threaten hundreds of millions in assistance already approved by Congress but not yet sent to states.

LIHEAP was created in 1981 and typically enjoys bipartisan support. Electric utilities support the program, calling it a “vital source of aid” for about 6 million low-income households annually.

Federal funds are authorized by Congress and directed to state programs that administer LIHEAP benefits. While these state

programs have funding to continue to operate for the coming months, “the elimination of federal staff threatens the stability of this popular, essential program in the coming fiscal years,” the National Consumer Law Center and National Energy Assistance Directors Association said in a joint statement.

LIHEAP received about \$4.1 billion in fiscal year 2024, and Congress continued funding at that level for 2025. Most of the funds have already been released to the states but about 10% remains, and those cannot be released until HHS determines the state-by-state allocation, NEADA Executive Director Mark Wolfe said in an email.

“The person responsible for making the calculations was also laid off Monday morning,” Wolfe said. “My concern is that the administration could say that without an allocation or staff to oversee the funding, they cannot distribute the \$378 million to the states.”

“It’s critical that HHS ensure there is no disruption to the administration of the LIHEAP program in order to protect families during future hot summers and cold winters,” NCLC Senior Attorney Olivia Wein said.

HHS Secretary Robert Kennedy Jr. called the HHS layoffs “a difficult moment,” but said in a post on X that “this overhaul is about realigning HHS with its core mission: to stop the chronic disease epidemic and Make America Healthy Again.”

HHS in total has announced a downsizing of 20,000 of its total 80,000 employees.

Sens. Bill Cassidy, R-La., chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. and ranking member, have invited Kennedy to testify on April 10

before the committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, about the HHS restructuring.

Rep. Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., called the cuts “massive and devastating.”

“This latest action from the Trump administration to eliminate the employees who deliver this aid is beyond callous. These cuts will rip away a lifeline for families,” Tonko said in a statement.

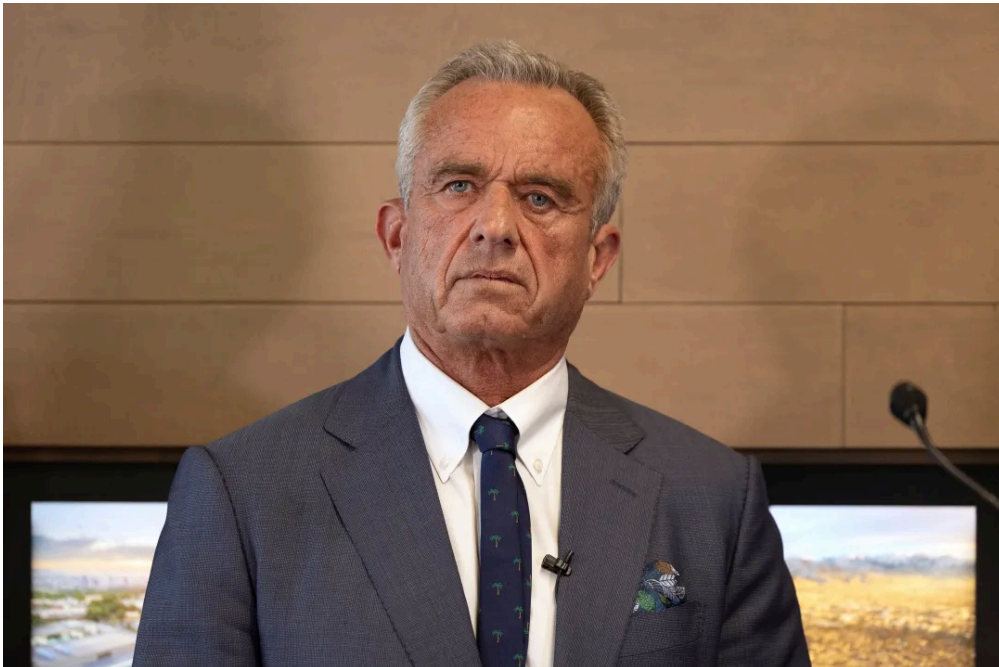
The Edison Electric Institute, which represents investor-owned utilities, said LIHEAP “provides a vital source of aid to millions of American families, and we strongly support this program.”

“Not only do we work closely with [the National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition] and other groups to advocate that federal funding for LIHEAP be maximized, electric companies also are working at the state level to streamline the process for connecting eligible customers to LIHEAP resources in their communities,” EEI said in a statement.

NEWS > HEALTH • News

# Colorado and other states ask judge to reverse deep cuts to U.S. Health and Human Services

HHS is one of the government's costliest federal agencies, with an annual budget of about \$1.7 trillion



Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. looks on during a press conference about Utah's new fluoride ban, food additives and SNAP funds legislation, Monday, April 7, 2025, in Salt Lake City. (AP Photo/Melissa Majchrzak)



By **REBECCA BOONE** | The Associated Press and **AMANDA SEITZ** | The Associated Press

UPDATED: May 5, 2025 at 1:59 PM MDT

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Attorneys general in Colorado, 17 other states and Washington, D.C., are challenging cuts to the [U.S. Health and Human Services](#) agency, saying the Trump administration's [massive restructuring](#) has destroyed life-saving programs and left states to pick up the bill for mounting health crises.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Rhode Island on Monday, New York Attorney General Letitia James said. The attorneys general from Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and the District of Columbia signed onto the complaint.

Health Secretary [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#) restructured the agency in March, eliminating more than [10,000 employees](#) and collapsing 28 agencies under the sprawling HHS umbrella into 15, the attorneys general said. An additional 10,000 employees had already been let go by President Donald Trump's administration, according to the lawsuit, and combined the cuts stripped 25% of the HHS workforce.

"Since its founding, HHS has worked to protect and advance the health and well-being of all Americans. Under Secretary's Kennedy's recent restructuring, that mission is in jeopardy, with Colorado and other states harmed by the undermining of the agency's statutory mission to address HIV/AIDs and other infectious diseases, the devastation of its capacity to address behavioral health issues like the opioid crisis, and the destabilization of the Food and Drug Administration," Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser said in a statement. "We are suing to stop the reckless dismantling of HHS and protect the health and security of Coloradans."

Kennedy has said he is seeking to streamline the nation's public health agencies and reduce redundancies across them with the layoffs. The cuts were made as part of a directive the administration has dubbed "[Make America Healthy Again](#)."

HHS is one of the government's costliest federal agencies, with an annual budget of about \$1.7 trillion that is mostly spent on health care coverage for millions of people enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid.

James, who is leading the lawsuit, called the restructuring a "sweeping and unlawful assault" that would endanger lives.

"This is not government reform. This is not efficiency," James said during a press conference Monday.

[The cuts](#) have resulted in laboratories having limited testing for some infectious diseases, the federal government not tracking cancer risks among U.S. firefighters, early childhood learning programs left unsure of future funds and programs aimed at monitoring cancer and maternal health closing, the attorneys general say. Cuts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also have hampered states' ability to respond to one of the largest measles outbreaks in recent years, the lawsuit says.

"This chaos and abandonment of the Department's core functions was not an unintended side effect, but rather the intended result," of the "MAHA Directive," they said. They want a judge to vacate the directive because they say the administration can't unilaterally eliminate programs and funding that have been created by Congress.

The restructuring eliminated the entire team of people who maintain the federal poverty guidelines used by states to determine whether residents are eligible for Medicaid, nutrition assistance and other programs. A tobacco prevention agency was gutted. Staff losses also were significant at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The Trump administration is already facing other legal challenges over cuts to public health agencies and research organizations. A coalition of 23 states filed a federal lawsuit in Rhode Island [last month](#) over the administration's decision to cut [\\$11 billion in federal funds](#) for COVID-19 initiatives and [various public health projects](#) across the country.

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*Originally Published: May 5, 2025 at 1:40 PM MDT*



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2025 > May > 5



Outlook

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**FW: Announcement from DC: US Dept of Health and Human Services is reorganizing and streamlining**

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**From** Erin Fisher <efisher@nwccog.org>

**Date** Fri 3/28/2025 12:53 PM

**Cc** Jon Stavney <jstavney@nwccog.org>

Hi Everyone,

Yesterday, the Trump Administration dismantled the Administration on Community Living, which is the department where the Older Americans Act and AAAs sit. The plan moves the functions and programs under ACL to other existing agencies within HHS, such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

We do not know what this means for our federal funding, if anything, which accounts for about 50% of our total funding. Please see below for the communication from our State Unit on Aging. We of course will let you know as soon as any additional information is released.

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**From:** Laura Strother <laura.strother@state.co.us>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 27, 2025 10:53 AM

**Subject:** Announcement from DC: US Dept of Health and Human Services is reorganizing and streamlining

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Hi AAAs,

We wanted to share this hot-off-the-press announcement from HHS as there will be impacts to the Administration for Community Living (ACL). We are unsure exactly what this reorganization will mean for ACL, but as we learn more, we are committed to sharing that with you. For now, please see this [press release](#) and this piece specific to ACL:

*"Reorganization of the Administration for Community Living (ACL): Critical programs that support older adults and people with disabilities will be integrated into other HHS agencies, including the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), ASPE, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This reorganization will not impact Medicare and Medicaid services."*

We have not heard anything from ACL just yet, but hope to soon. Stay tuned for more details.

In partnership,

Laura

**Laura Strother, MA**  
**State Unit on Aging Program Director**  
**Office of Adult, Aging and Disability Services**

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Why pronouns matter...



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[https://www.aspendailynews.com/news/federal-funding-cuts-could-affect-midday-meals-for-seniors-and-more/article\\_57542c85-e969-43e5-88fb-781b79d1c862.html](https://www.aspendailynews.com/news/federal-funding-cuts-could-affect-midday-meals-for-seniors-and-more/article_57542c85-e969-43e5-88fb-781b79d1c862.html)







# Federal funding cuts could affect midday meals for seniors — and more

Josie Taris, Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

Mar 30, 2025

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Jere Rood didn't start utilizing senior services programming until he retired at 72, though it's open to anyone aged 60 or older. He attends the lunches regularly now for a nutritious meal and social interaction.

Jason Charme/Aspen Daily News

Dollar for dollar, the cheapest lunch in Aspen may not cost \$17. But if you're 60 or older, you'll be hard pressed to find a better deal than a suggested donation of \$4.

Most weekdays at noon, the front conference room of Pitkin County's Schultz Health and Human Services building becomes an Aspen eatery unicorn, with almost all locals gathering for a meal that costs most diners less than \$5 (the location is a temporary change of venue while repairs are being made to the nearby Senior Center building due to recent water damages).

The monthly menu is published ahead of time. Everyone knows that "crab cake day" will draw one of the biggest crowds.

Attendees schedule doctor appointments and other errands around the lunch, which for many seniors is the biggest, most important meal of the day.

“For being blind, it makes it that much easier for me to have this as my main meal for the day, not only for the wonderful food, but also, I have strong feelings about seniors not isolating and being involved with other people,” said Jere Rood, 87, a lunch program regular for the past 15 years.

The **Senior Services Lunch Program** offers a multicourse hot meal and coffee or tea for whoever would like it. **Anyone under 60 can call a day ahead for a \$17 lunch while the 60-and-over crowd pays via donation.**

It’s one of the Senior Center’s most popular programs, and it exists because of a federal grant — putting it on the list of at-risk funding to be reduced or cut as soon as the next fiscal year.

## Preparing for the worst, but hoping for the best

No funding has been yanked, yet, according to Lindsay Maisch, the county’s director of human services.

The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act of 2025 will keep the federal government funded through Sept. 30, the end of the fiscal year. After the initial flurry of executive orders in President Donald Trump’s first weeks in office, the

continuing resolution allows enough stability for Maisch's department to form contingency plans.

"Some of the things that we're looking at are the areas that are lower risk — or that we feel like should be lower risk," Maisch said. "But given the ground moving underneath us right now, it's unclear if it's lower risk right now."

Ad removed. [Details](#)



The county's human services department oversees programs relating to adult and family services, economic services and senior services. It connects the public with resources and programs like the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid** and foster care.

The staff hopes that child welfare, adult protection and safety programs are all a low risk for being cut, but nothing is guaranteed.

Chad Federwitz, senior services director for Pitkin County, helps prepare lunch for seniors at the Schultz Health and Human Services building on Friday.

Jason Charme/Aspen Daily News

As of Thursday, amid news reports that public and behavioral health care in Colorado would lose up to \$250 million in planned and ongoing federal funding,

Maisch said it's all moving so fast that it's difficult to manage.

"I can't keep up," she said. "It's just a wild landscape."

For 2025, the county department has an approximate \$6.2 million budget. Per financial analysis of the human services budget and what they're hearing from state and federal partners, anywhere from \$1.6 million to \$2.5 million is at risk, depending on what's ultimately cut — though that's subject to change.

Maisch said the potential cuts stem from combination of executive orders from Trump and an anticipated decrease in funding to relevant programs in the 2026 federal budget and beyond.

Social services and grants that could see cuts, total or partial, identified so far include:

- The Community Services Block Grant, a federal program that provides funding to address the causes and conditions of poverty in communities
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides food benefits to low-income families
- Hunger Free Colorado, which provides SNAP outreach and information

- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, a cash assistance program for low-income households
- Medicaid
- Area Agency on Aging, which provides nutrition services for older adults
- Child support services
- The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, which helps families that are homeless, working, searching for work or in school to fund low-income child care assistance
- Child welfare grants
- The Low-income Energy Assistance Program, which helps households afford winter home-heating costs
- A health care navigation grant
- A state Department of Health Care Policy and Financing grant



Nutrition parameters enumerated in the Older Americans Act dictate that publicly funded senior meals adhere to the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The price is set by the state: Lunch at senior centers in Colorado costs \$17 and includes an entree, a salad and a dessert — plus unlimited coffee or tea.

Jason Charme/Aspen Daily News

All of the changes will only increase demand on Maisch's department, as a loss of government funds may mean shrinking capacity on a resource and staff level amid increased community need.

"We get [busier] because more people do not qualify, but they're going to be applying because they need the help," Maisch said. "We anticipate that we won't be able to reach the community in the ways that we have since, really, Obama was elected."

That likely will translate into longer wait times and backlogs for food, housing and health care assistance, according to Maisch. Funding losses could impact staffing, with potential layoffs resulting in the loss of caseworkers, administrative staff and other employees.

Nonprofit partners are a crucial tool within the human services framework, but with many funded with federal pass-through dollars, the future is similarly uncertain.

To backfill the funding losses, county human services staff has started conversations with grant partners like Aspen Skiing Co., the city of Aspen and Aspen Community Foundation to make funding go further, Maisch said.

Pitkin County's Healthy Community Fund is a property tax-backed source that benefits human services throughout the county and region. It supports mandated services within the county and external nonprofits that support those goals and more. In the 2025 budget, \$608,499 from the fund is set to be transferred to the human services department. Pitkin County voters approved its continuance in 2018 for nine more years, meaning the tax and its revenue will sunset in 2027 without voter reauthorization.

Meanwhile, the county is balancing numerous bond- and tax-related ballot questions over the next few years that will deal with the Aspen-Pitkin County Airport, the Solid Waste Center (landfill) and the jail.



Helene Baran, pictured, and her husband John drive from their home in Glenwood Springs to see their friends at Pitkin County Senior Center for lunches and other programming. Garfield and Eagle counties both offer lunch programs, but the Barans have been attending Pitkin County's programs for so long they will make the drive for as long as they are able.

Jason Charme/Aspen Daily News

A Healthy Community Fund ballot question will go in front of voters in 2026. Maisch said once her department has the full picture on federal funding, the county (including the Board of County Commissioners) will consider whether to ask for a higher property tax rate to raise more funding for the county and its nonprofit partners.

But to do that could increase the risk that voters reject the measure entirely, drying up a funding source that's crucial even in times of predictable federal funding.

Either way, Maisch said the Healthy Community Fund will not be used to fully cover federal funding shortfalls. Some programs will just shrink or evaporate as they cannot be covered by other funds. For others, it may come down to asking the BOCC to prioritize human services.

“We will have to go to our board and ask them to place value on these programs and which ones are more valuable than the other. And it’s hard, it’s impossible to do,” Maisch said. “Is food more valuable than shelter? Is health care more valuable than aging in place?”



The gathering spot for senior lunches is a conference room in Pitkin County’s Health and Human Services building off Castle Creek Road.

Jason Charme/Aspen Daily News

## Senior lunch program

The program that facilitated over 10,000 lunches for Pitkin County seniors and residents in 2024 is one such program.

The menu isn't your grandmother's senior center lunch of boxed mac-and-cheese and jello. For example, diners will get wild mushroom pasta, peas, asparagus, red peppers, house salad and tiramisu on Thursday (April 3).

It's served in eco-friendly to-go containers allowing patrons to take their meal with them if they so choose. As many as 40 to 80 people a week choose to dine at the Senior Center with friends or make new ones.

The program is a product of the Older Americans Act of 1965, which created the Administration on Aging to administer grants for seniors. The Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 reauthorized programs for fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2024.

Through Pitkin County Senior Services, the lunch program employs a chef to cook lunch four lunches a week — every day but Tuesdays, which one day could be added. The grant dictates nutritional value and priorities and a nutrition facts sheet is available for every meal.

Homebound seniors are eligible to have their lunches delivered to them, for which Senior Services recruits volunteers.

Chad Federwitz, senior services director for Pitkin County, said lunch program funding for the past few years was around \$80,000 to \$90,000. Maisch said her department is anticipating cuts, but not a total loss.

“People like the food. They need the food. The reasoning of why they're accessing it isn't super important to us,” Federwitz said. “What's important to us is that people are getting it, it's high quality and they keep coming back.”

The county's senior services program gets most of its funding through Healthy Community Fund money, Federwitz said, but in a landscape of diminished federal funding, securing that money could become more competitive.

Helene and John Baran eat lunch through the program at least three days a week. They were longtime visitors, then lived upvalley for a while. Once they retired, they bought a house in Glenwood Springs.

Since their community is upvalley, they make the commute to Aspen for lunch and other programs at the Senior Center.

Helene, 89, drives herself and her husband to the center. She estimated that they've been coming to the lunches for at least 10 years and losing that community connection would be "devastating."

"We're so conditioned to coming here and it's the only outlet we have. There's very little," she said. "Even though there are programs in the library, they're not as social, so this atmosphere and what is delivered is just all-encompassing. We would miss it terribly."

A lot of the lunch crowd includes regulars who attend Senior Center seminars on things like navigating Social Security, movement and mobility classes or educational presentations for curious minds.

“Having resources to do that, as we do here in Pitkin County mainly because of the support of the county itself and the Healthy Community Fund, allows us to be a little more creative and innovative, kind of pushing the boundaries of some of those, say, rules,” Federwitz said.

Including a meal between activities and medical appointments is part of the larger picture for aging adults’ physical and emotional health.

For John, 92, the variety of conversation, life experiences and political views is the highlight of lunches at the Senior Center.

“It’s interesting, when you get to be our age, all those contrasts can work together and make an interesting conversation, because you don’t want to get angry with each other because you’re old enough to know better,” he said.

The Senior Center is set to reopen on April 9 following completion of repairs.

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