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CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES, PUBLIC HEALTH, FACE IMPACT OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners heard a report on the impact of the shutdown of the Federal Government on County services during its meeting on October 7, 2013. Social Services Director John Eller and Public Health Director Doug Urland indicated some programs are already being impacted by the shutdown and others could be impacted if the shutdown continues over an extended period of time.

Transportation programs that serve Medicaid patients and Senior Nutrition participants, programs that serve vulnerable citizens (low income citizens, those at risk of abuse or neglect), and nutrition programs like the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program are already being impacted. Staff recommended the use of other existing funds to offset the lost funds until more is known about the length of the shutdown and the decisions made by the United States Congress relative to the Federal debt ceiling.

“The shutdown affects our most vulnerable citizens, infants, children, adults and seniors,” said Catawba County Manager J. Thomas Lundy. “This is not a situation the County created. It can only be fixed by the Federal Government. If the shutdown continues, services will be curtailed.”

Social Services and Public Health are more directly impacted by the Federal shutdown because both receive funding from the State of North Carolina which, in turn, receives Federal funding impacted by the shutdown.

“Many of our programs depend on Federal dollars to serve the most needy among our citizens. Over 96% of our budget is either state or federal revenue” said Eller, who estimated the impact in funding to programs that affect Catawba County Social Services at \$10 million dollars, most of which are mandated services. The daily estimated impact of possible lost revenues equates to \$38,000 per day.

“Our local transportation system (Greenway) will be impacted by these cuts,” Eller said. “Greenway handles a number of our non-emergency medical transportation trips and citizens utilize the public bus system for appointments.

“Locating another provider quickly is not an option,” Eller added. “This is due to the various contractual requirements the State placed on Social Services this year. Social Services has no current capacity, vehicles, staff, or infrastructure to cover these trips, as our door to door Medicaid Transportation unit is at maximum capacity. Therefore, we would likely not be able to handle much of the overflow need. These include citizens who are on dialysis, as well as those who are disabled and require special vehicles to meet their transportation needs.

Transportation cuts could essentially close down our nutrition sites, since our Senior Nutrition Congregate Site participants rely on Greenway to transport participants,” Eller said. “Lastly, low income citizens rely on Greenway for much of their essential shopping and transportation needs. Thus, these cutbacks would be devastating for them all around.”

Urland said the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program is a federal program that provides supplemental food, nutrition education and counseling to women, infants, and young children.

“In North Carolina, existing federal funds will allow enrolled WIC participants to maintain their appointments and continue



redeeming their vouchers for now,” Urland said. “New WIC clients will continue to be enrolled through at least Tuesday, October 8, 2013. If there are insufficient funds to continue serving eligible participants or serve new applicants, the North Carolina Division of Public Health may require local WIC Programs to implement a waiting list.”

“The impacts of the shutdown will get worse the longer it lasts, particularly for programs that are administered by the states,” Eller concluded. “The states will run out of funds and would need to reduce services. In the past, the State has floated the counties when there was an assumption that federal funding would eventually come. We had hoped that any expenses incurred would be recouped after funding is restored since the budget would be retroactive. However, the State has advised that should a local government continue to operate a program impacted by the shutdown, the local government will assume financial responsibility for costs incurred during the shutdown.”

[Click for an overview of programs impacted and revenues involved.](#)

