

Despite shutdown, business as usual for Catholic Charities' programs

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Across the country, federally-funded programs are reportedly halting services due to the partial government shutdown that began after Congress failed to pass a funding bill by an Oct. 1 deadline.

Programs administered by Catholic Charities of Baltimore, however, are currently unaffected by the shutdown, according to a spokesperson, including four Baltimore-area Head Start programs.

The status of Head Start programs, which provide child and family development for low-income families, are drawing particular concern nationwide. Head Start programs have temporally closed in Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia and Mississippi, affecting more than 5,000 children.

Programs in six other states with grants scheduled to begin Oct. 1 are also at risk, according to Sally Aman, a spokesperson for the National Head Start Association.

In Maryland, Head Start programs, including those run by Catholic Charities, remain open because their grant year has already taken effect.

"It is other programs whose grants start from here on out in the year who are unable to provide services," Liz Frye, director of Catholic Charities' Head Start and Early Head Start, said in an Oct. 3 statement.

Catholic Charities of Baltimore runs Carroll County Head Start; Harford County Early Head Start; St. Jerome's Head Start in Baltimore City; and Head Start Consultation, which provides behavioral consultation and mental health services for Head Start-enrolled families in Baltimore City, Harford and Carroll Counties.

Nationally, about 19,000 children are at risk of losing Head Start services due to the partial shutdown, according to the National Head Start Association. Approximately 57,000 children lost Head Start services earlier in the year due to the budget sequestration, according to Amy Collier, Catholic Charities of Baltimore's Head Start and Early Head Start administrator.

Many low-income parents rely on Head Start for their children's early education, child care and nutritious meals.

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