# Trump administration cuts deeply impact federal child welfare and education programmes



The Trump administration has undertaken extensive reductions and restructuring across numerous federal government programs, with particularly significant impacts on services and supports designed for vulnerable children in the United States. While dramatic cuts to federal agencies and programs have been widely reported, ProPublica’s investigation highlights lesser-known but equally profound changes affecting children’s welfare, education, and health services.

Over recent months, thousands of staff members in federal programmes supporting children’s well-being have been laid off, offices closed, and longstanding funding streams curtailed or rescinded across departments including Health and Human Services (HHS), Education, Agriculture, and Justice. The reductions are occurring in key offices traditionally tasked with overseeing essential child services: the Children’s Bureau, Office of Family Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and others. The scale of severance has been described by experts as “decimating” the federal “kid agency,” referring to the Department of Education, which alone has lost some 2,000 employees.

At HHS, under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., staff managing the distribution of around $1.7 billion annually in Social Services Block Grants have been dismissed. These grants have been vital for state-run child welfare systems, foster care, adoption services, day care, counselling, and disability programmes. Regional HHS offices covering more than 20 states have been shuttered abruptly, disrupting oversight and local support networks. One state child support director interviewed by ProPublica, speaking anonymously, stated: “We have no idea who will be auditing us... If the national system goes down, so does ours.” The closure of these regional offices also jeopardises collaboration with tribal authorities, who depend on federal liaison for child support and welfare issues.

The Department of Education has rescinded up to $3 billion initially allocated for pandemic recovery in schools nationwide. These funds were slated for initiatives such as tutoring programmes in Maryland and infrastructure improvements for safer air and water in districts like Flint, Michigan. The Department of Agriculture has cancelled $660 million in grants dedicated to farm-to-school programmes supplying fresh food to cafeterias while supporting small farmers.

Head Start, the early childhood education programme serving some one million children, faces severe strain following the dismissal of Office of Head Start regional staff and budget proposals aiming to eliminate its funding entirely. Some local Head Start centres are already closing, and remaining programmes report bureaucratic barriers to accessing their appropriated budgets. These closures raise concerns about child care availability, particularly in rural areas where Head Start often acts as a critical support for working parents.

Medicaid, which covers a majority of children from lower- and middle-income families, is also under threat. Potential budget cuts under Congressional Republicans, if signed into law by President Trump, could reduce access to crucial health services delivered through schools, foster care systems, and specialised treatments.

The Department of Justice has removed grant application processes for juvenile and child protection programmes that typically distribute more than $400 million annually. These include funding opportunities for local police task forces combating internet child exploitation, programmes supporting abused children, court-appointed advocacy, and mentoring initiatives such as Big Brothers Big Sisters. Liz Ryan, former administrator of the DOJ’s juvenile division, expressed alarm at the lack of communication regarding the fate of these grants and the resulting uncertainty for community organisations relying on federal support.

According to Bruce Lesley, president of the advocacy group First Focus on Children, “Everyone’s been talking about what the Trump administration and DOGE have been doing, but no one seems to be talking about how, in a lot of ways, it’s been an assault on kids.” He emphasised the unique targeting of child-focused agencies amidst the wider federal retrenchment.

The Trump administration’s public statements have asserted a commitment to protecting children. Recent White House posts cited policies primarily related to transgender issues and a ban on COVID-19 vaccine mandates in schools, rather than the broader range of child welfare programmes impacted by budgetary and staffing cuts.

Spokespersons for the Department of Education have defended the cutbacks to pandemic recovery funding by stating that “COVID is over” and criticised extensions granted by the previous administration. The HHS stated its restructuring aims to reduce “wasteful bureaucracy,” with plans to integrate children’s services into a new “Administration for Healthy America.”

Overall, the disbanding of regional offices, termination of expert personnel, removal of funding streams, and elimination of grant opportunities have created significant uncertainty for state and local agencies, tribal authorities, school districts, and non-profit organisations that serve millions of children across the country. As the delivery of critical child support enforcement, education, health, and protective services is disrupted, many stakeholders face challenges in maintaining existing programme operations and meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families nationwide.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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