

Local organizations could lose money after debt deal

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WICHITA, Kansas -- Running an operation like Meals On Wheels takes a lot of time and volunteers, but most of all it takes a lot of money, part of which comes from the Federal government. But the money the program gets could be in jeopardy because of the compromised debt ceiling bill.

"We have no idea of what kind of cuts are coming down; I have heard anywhere from 10 percent to 80 percent," said Laurel Alkire, executive director of Senior Services in Wichita.

The bill includes spending caps that would reduce the deficit by nearly \$1 trillion immediately, but a committee will have to come up with another \$1.5 trillion in cuts. Where those cuts will occur is the question. Many organizations are almost certain they'll hit right at home.

"I certainly don't want them to balance the budget on the backs of vulnerable citizens like our senior citizens," Alkire said.

Child Start in Wichita, which runs Head Start, is also eyeing how a loss of federal dollars could affect services.

Right now, they receive nearly \$8 million annually.

"We don't know what is likely to come, so we ought to be thinking about all of the possible scenarios and that's what we'll be doing," said Teresa Rupp, executive director of Child Start.

Worst case scenario that would mean reducing the number of children in the program, or shortening the day.

Rupp is hopeful that low-income type programs will be left alone.

"We know that early childhood is an important part of what helps kids succeed in their lives for the rest of their lives," Rupp said.