

Federal Budget Cuts Impacting SENCA Head Start

(KTNC) - Federal Budget cuts are affecting Head Start programs in southeast Nebraska.

SENCA Head Start pre-school programs began the year September 3rd, with ten fewer students and three fewer staff members. The lower numbers are due to budget cuts as a result of the federal government sequestration.

Crystal Dunekacke is SENCA's Head Start Director. She says they saw a decrease of more than \$62,000 in Federal grant funding, directly affecting the Head Start program for this school year.

SENCA Head Start serves low-income pre-school students in southeast Nebraska. SENCA operates Head Start Centers in Falls City, Auburn, Table Rock, and Nebraska City, and they also have collaboration sites that serve students at Auburn, Falls City Public, and HTRS schools.

Dunekacke says the vast majority of their funding goes into personnel, so when they have budget cuts they have to cut staff. She says most of the staff reductions were in Auburn.

Prior to the budget cut, there were 156 3-to-5 year old children in the SENCA Head Start program. There are 146 in the program this school year.

Dunekacke says there may be more cuts to the program in the future as a result of sequestration.

According to information from SENCA, children in the Head Start program met or exceeded expectations for social emotional skills by 22-percent and increased language and mathematics skills from the fall of 2012 to spring of 2013.

For information about Head Start or other SENCA programs, visit their website, www.senca.org.