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## **Sequester Cuts Funds To Headstart Program**

JACKSON, Mich. (WLNS) - Not every child is back in school this week. Kids in the headstart program start up next week. The program is free for families that qualify, but because of government cuts, fewer kids will benefit this year.

Melissa Ladd Patnode spends her days helping other people. When her youngest son didn't get into headstart last year, she needed some help herself.

"Luckily I kind of thought all that through a little bit so it wasn't complete meltdown. But I still had to figure out a back-up plan for Ashton to make sure that he doesn't fall behind developmentally," said Patnode, a serious concern for a single working mom.

Mary Deluca oversees Headstart with the Community Action Agency. Deluca says because of last spring's sequestration, 80 slots in the program in Jackson and Hillsdale counties were cut.

"Congress was able to change the way that airports are ran so they didn't have to be delayed with traffic controller issues, but it's ok to cut services to the most vulnerable because they don't have a voice," said Deluca.

Brooke Rains works with Child Care Network. That organization awarded scholarships to 20 of the kids who didn't get into Headstart to attend a different program. But she says they can only do so much. "We've probably used our funds faster than in past years because of sequestration. Reaching out to those families, very quickly," said Rains.

One of Patnode's boys got a scholarship last year and it helped, but in her opinion, if headstart loses funding, her child loses out, too.

"You know, it would have been great if he would have been able to go there and have a jumpstart, a headstart. But unfortunately, we were not able to experience that for him," said Patnode.

Unless Congress takes action, the next round of sequestration cuts happen October 1. Deluca says as it is now, that would mean another 5 percent cut to headstart.