

Even less for the poor...

In the last few days, homeless shelters, food banks and other Louisville social-service providers have learned one of their funding streams has been zeroed out — for the first time in 27 years.

John Nevitt of Metro United Way sent an email on Friday alerting various agencies that Jefferson County did not receive any money from the Emergency Food and Shelter Board Program for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. That's a half-million dollars gone. Poof. Nationally, the program has had 40 percent of its federal dollars slashed.

Nevitt thought this might trickle down into a 40 percent reduction in Jefferson County's allotment. But, the way the program is set up, jurisdictions have to apply for the dollars every year. And it appears that this year, Metro Louisville's poverty rate (12.4 percent) and unemployment rate (10.5 percent) were too *low* to qualify for assistance. Nevitt's reaction?

"Perhaps on one hand that means we're better off than other cities. But that's certainly not what providers are telling me ... the need is great."

Nevitt still is not clear on whether the formula the program's used since 1983 has changed and, perhaps, that's why suddenly Louisville is no longer eligible for funding. There is a small pot of money from the program — \$259,825 — being set aside in case of emergency, but jurisdictions from around the state will compete for that.

Providers like St. Vincent de Paul, Wayside and Volunteers of America use the Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds to supplement other streams of revenue. It certainly isn't the largest chunk of money they receive, but cuts are coming at them in all directions.

"I'm worried about the months ahead," Nevitt says.

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