

# RILS and Local Programs Threatened by Shutdown

## THE PARTIAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN AND YOU:

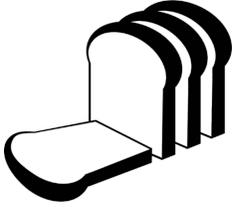
### *Six Things You Should Know to Navigate these Unprecedented Times\**

As the U.S. continues to deal with the longest government shutdown in its history, Rhode Island's most vulnerable citizens are caught in the crosshairs and concerned, even more, about their futures. These concerns run the gamut from the status of benefits checks, to school lunches, housing and where additional help can be found. RILS has pulled together six things you should know about the shutdown no matter who you are or what you do. Because even if you are lucky enough not to be one of the hundreds of thousands of Rhode Islanders directly impacted by the shutdown, in a state as close knit as ours, someone you know and love probably is.



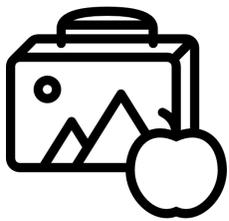
### 1. VA Benefits

The VA has secured funding through fiscal year 2019, meaning that VA operations will continue uninterrupted, including VA medical centers; veterans benefits, including disability, pension and GI Bill benefits; and benefits claims processing. **However, active duty service members of the Coast Guard are currently working without pay.**



## 2. SNAP/Nutrition Assistance

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) needs to issue SNAP benefits early in order to ensure that clients receive their February benefits. Current SNAP recipients will receive their **February benefits January 20th**. For people renewing SNAP benefits, if the renewal was completed by DHS by January 16, the February benefits will be on the EBT card on January 20. **Households need to know: you will not get SNAP benefits again until March 1st** (and only if the federal government makes funds available).



## 3. School Meals

Hot lunches and school breakfast for low income students should be available through part of March.



## 4. Taxes

The U.S. Tax Court and the IRS Taxpayer Advocate are both closed until further notice. We have been unable to reach any IRS employee by telephone or fax. But returns still need to be filed. RILS is encouraging everyone to file 2018 tax returns as soon as possible so that the return will be 'in the queue' when the employees eventually begin processing returns. The IRS free online filing software is available now at [IRS.gov/freefile](https://www.irs.gov/freefile). [Click here](#) to find your local [volunteer income tax assistance center](#).



## 5. Subsidized Housing

RILS sees an increased risk of homelessness as government contracts with landlords expire due to funding lapses. Press reports indicate that since the shutdown began more than 1,100 federal rental assistance contracts have not been renewed -

impacting rental assistance agreements between private property owners and the federal government. These landlords are contracted to house low and very low-income residents, including senior citizens and those with disabilities. They charge the residents below market rates, while the government makes up the shortfall between what is charged to the resident and market rent. HUD has reportedly urged property owners to tap their reserve accounts as a short-term solution for keeping tenants in place. RILS does not yet know the precise impact of these funding shortfalls on Rhode Islanders.



## 6. Unemployment Benefits

According to the [Department of Labor and Training website](#), furloughed workers may be eligible for unemployment compensation.

*\*This summary provided is only for informational purposes. It does not constitute legal advice, and RILS recommends that benefits recipients should consult all available information to obtain the most up to date and accurate information as the shutdown continues.*

## We need your help: The federal government shutdown impacts funding for RILS programs

With no end in sight to the federal government shutdown, funding for RILS from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) **will be cut by at least 35%** for the month of February. This loss of funding creates a shortfall of **\$30,743.65** in our monthly budget.

February aside, approximately 57% of RILS funding comes from federal grants and appropriations, such as the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant. The VOCA grant provides funds for our victim-focused programs, including the Safe Family Project, the Elder Protection Project, and the LGBTQ Protection Project. Our Low Income Taxpayer Clinic is primarily supported by IRS funding and, with tax season upon

us, this is a crucial program for this time of year. These funding sources - and the numerous programs the funds support- are increasingly at risk as the shutdown continues.

Low-income Rhode Islanders are being hurt by the shutdown more than anyone else and are already facing its effects. **They need us now more than ever.** We [need to supplement federal funding shortfalls now](#) so we can continue our critical work for Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents without disruption. **Please [consider donating today](#) to help your Rhode Island community, and we thank you for your generous support!**

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