

WIC program could see cuts nationwide

Jun 14, 2011 at 9:26 PM

Fla.-For many on the Women, Infants, and Children program, vouchers are the difference between a nourishing meal for the kids and something less healthy.

Leslie Galt just started the program this week after moving from Pennsylvania.

"It helps out with groceries like the everyday essentials -- milk, eggs, cereal," she says.

Galt is in between jobs and had one reaction when she heard funding could be cut to what she considers a key program.

"My heart dropped," she says.

The U.S. House voted Tuesday to increase funding for veterans programs, meaning less money will be available for domestic aid programs like WIC.

The Lee County Health Department says nearly 19,000 people participate in WIC throughout Lee, Hendry, and Glades counties, with a family of 3 qualifying for help earning less than roughly \$2,900 a month.

According to the department, the program focuses on nutrition education and breastfeeding support for women and children up to 5 years of age.

"It's truly a matter of health -- giving them what they need to get through those first 5 years of growth," says Diane Holm, with the department.

Lawmakers against the measure say that more than 200,000 people nationwide could be out of help if food prices go up as expected.

While it's too soon to tell what a cut would mean on a local level, for those whose kids have been helped by the program, the idea of offering less to those in need is unthinkable.

"That ain't right. There's a lot more they can cut than funding for people that need it for their children," says Michael Feuston, who has two kids who participated in WIC.