



Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Timeline of Attacks

- **February 5, 2025:** DOGE agents gained access to the payment and contracting systems of HHS' Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
- **February 14, 2025:** DOGE agent Rachel Riley met with the heads of CMS.
- **February 14, 2025:** DOGE Agent and former Palantir employee Clark Minor was installed as chief information officer at HHS.
- **February 15, 2025:** 3,600 probationary employees were terminated at HHS. Most of the firings were at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which lost around 1,300 employees, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which lost between 1,000 and 1,200 employees.
- **February 21, 2025:** The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a subagency of HHS, lost 10% of its staff to DOGE cuts. Some of the terminated staff were working on a mental health crisis hotline.
- **March 10, 2025:** Nearly all HHS employees received deferred resignation offers with a \$25,000 incentive.
- **March 26, 2025:** HHS announced it was cutting \$11.4 billion of funding for state and local health departments.
- **March 27, 2025:** HHS announced it was aiming to reduce its workforce by 20,000 employees and had achieved half of that goal through deferred resignations and early retirements.
- **April 1, 2025:** HHS announced that it would be laying off 10,000 employees in accordance with DOGE efforts. The cuts included 2,400 positions at the CDC, 3,500 positions at the Food and Drug Administration, and 1,200 at the National Institutes of Health.
- **April 2, 2025:** DOGE ordered HHS to reduce contract spending by 35%.
- **April 3, 2025:** Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said that 20% of DOGE cuts at HHS are going to be "mistakes" and employees will need to be reinstated.
- **April 17, 2025:** DOGE rolled out a "Defend the Spend" program at HHS that put a hold on funding in some subagencies, requiring grant awardees to justify each disbursement and receive approval from political appointees.
- **April 22, 2025:** *Wired* reported that DOGE had gained access to a total of 19 sensitive systems at HHS, including those that handle Medicaid payments to states.
- **May 2, 2025:** The FDA rehired FOIA workers that had been terminated during April's DOGE cuts.
- **May 2, 2025:** The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health moved to terminate over 900 employees, including those working on mine safety and workplace respiratory hazards. Around 328 of these firings were reversed a few weeks later after pressure from unions and representatives.



- **June 16, 2025:** HHS [reinstated](#) approximately 800 CDC employees who had been terminated in April.
- **June 24, 2025:** Secretary Kennedy [told](#) Congress that HHS has rehired a total 1,250 employees who had been terminated in DOGE layoffs.
- **July 16, 2025:** A DOGE review of CDC grants [delayed](#) \$140 million of funding for fentanyl overdose response efforts.

Impacts on Capacity

Under the dual threats of DOGE and Health Secretary RFK Jr.'s "Make America Healthy Again" agenda, HHS [lost](#) roughly 25% of its workforce due to terminations and deferred resignations. The cuts affected a host of critical programs which the department manages in service of its expansive mission and authority.

HHS let go of the [team](#) that administers the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, which has collected data on drug use and mental health since 1971, serving as a critical resource for research and policy. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program was virtually eliminated, with all full time staff terminated.

In April, cuts at the CDC initially [included](#) over 200 workers at the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in Morgantown, West Virginia. As a result of firings, the union said hundreds of lab animals would be euthanized. In May, around 900 employees at NIOSH were [slated](#) to be terminated, including those working on tracking cancer in firefighters and combating black lung in coal miners. After pushback, 328 employees were [rehired](#).

At CMS, the agency [lost](#) employees who worked on initiatives to improve care for beneficiaries, staffers who oversaw the Affordable Care Act, and staffers working on insurance fraud, among others.

At the FDA, DOGE cut staff [responsible](#) for overseeing the regulation of prescription drugs and medical devices, as well as [support staff](#) at offices that conducted inspections of food processing and drug manufacturing plants. This included 20 people at the office of neurological and physical medicine devices, which was [responsible](#) for oversight of Elon Musk's brain chip company Neuralink. 140 members of the agency's Center for Veterinary Medicine [were](#) also fired.

In all, the consolidation or elimination of HHS divisions [reduced](#) the number of subagencies in the department from 28 to 15 and resulted in the loss of a quarter of its staff.



Material Harms

In addition to the massive layoffs and resignations at HHS, the dramatic reduction of grants will negatively impact health efforts across the country.

Some major DOGE cuts included:

- \$226 million [for](#) the Minnesota Department of Health, a quarter of its budget. The funds were used in vaccination clinics and health programs, among other initiatives.
- Funds for “immunizations, health disparities, community health workers, and epidemiology programs” [administered](#) by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, said by DOGE to total \$49 million.
- Approximately \$10 million for the Louisiana Department of Health for mental health, substance abuse, and crisis services. While DOGE’s website [claimed](#) to have saved \$55 million by cutting grants to the Louisiana Health Department, the department’s Deputy Secretary said cuts were closer to \$10 million.
- A \$4 million CDC grant [for](#) HIV prevention in Tennessee.

The cancelled grants had immediate impacts—some vaccination clinics were forced to close right away—but the decimation of funding will also inevitably lead to lower vaccination rates for various diseases, and, in turn, lead to more preventable disease and death.

The safety of our food and drug systems has also been put at risk. Even prior to losing over 3,000 employees, the FDA inspection regime was woefully inadequate: in 2024, the Government Accountability Office [found](#) a 16% vacancy rate for FDA investigators, leading to fewer inspections than in 2019. While investigators themselves were [exempted](#) from cuts, terminating the support staff that handle travel and logistics for investigators will only slow the pace of inspections and investigations, diminishing the government’s ability to guarantee sanitary food processing and safe medical devices. Current FDA investigators speaking with *NPR* [detailed](#) how travel reimbursements were slowed and booking travel arrangements made more difficult due to the loss of staff. Speaking about the firings at the FDA, the president of the American Veterinary Medical Association [warned](#) that oversight of food safety and animal-borne diseases would become limited by personnel cuts.

At the CDC, experts warned that cuts at the agency will harm disease research, prevention, and communication. The cuts were [far ranging](#) across the agency, hitting research into hepatitis, sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, gun violence, and domestic violence. It will be hard to directly trace the relationship between these cuts and any spikes in these issues, but one thing is clear: the government’s ability to understand and combat these problems has been decimated by DOGE.



Notable Names

Resignations

- **Susan Monarez:** Director of the CDC who was ousted in August 2025 after less than one month on the job after refusing to sign on to “unscientific, reckless directives,” according to her attorneys.
- **Dr. Debra Houry:** Deputy director of the CDC who resigned in response to the termination of Director Monarez.
- **Dr. Daniel Jernigan:** Head of the CDC’s National Center for Emerging Zoonotic Infectious Diseases who resigned in response to the termination of Director Monarez, saying it was clear that the administration was not interested in an “evidence-based approach.”
- **Dr. Demetre Daskalakis:** Head of the CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases who resigned in response to Monarez’s termination, citing Secretary Kennedy’s anti-vaccine rhetoric and the administration’s “efforts to erase transgender populations” in his resignation letter.
- **Jen Layden:** Director of the Office of Public Health Data at the CDC who resigned after budget cuts made it “challenging” for her office to do its job.
- **Peter Marks:** Top vaccine official at the FDA who resigned in protest of Secretary Kennedy’s anti-vaccine views and misinformation.
- **Michael Rogers:** FDA’s associate commissioner for inspections and investigations who resigned in May 2025 after 34 years with the agency.

DOGE Agents

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| • Luke Farritor | • Aram Moghaddassi |
| • Marko Elez | • Zachary Terrell |
| • Edward Coristine | • Kyle Schutt |
| • Rachel Riley | • Clark Minor |