

New Report

Who Gets Hurt?

**Trump, Musk, and RFK Jr. Are Endangering Millions
by Slashing Lifesaving Health Care With HHS Cuts**

*From Cancer Patients and Pregnant Women to Seniors with
Alzheimer's and Kids with Diabetes – Trump's Dismantling of HHS
Isn't Streamlining Government, It's Risking Lives*

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Over the past few weeks, Donald Trump and RFK Jr., with the help of Elon Musk, have launched a senseless attack on our nation's health care system. They have wiped out everything from Alzheimer's and cancer research, to maternal health and child care programs, and efforts to improve mental health and substance use treatment.

Trump and Musk are playing political games with programs that save lives. Their reckless cuts will have devastating consequences on people around the country. Their dismantling of HHS rips away Americans' access to lifesaving medical care, compromises the safety of our food and water, makes it more dangerous to have a child and start a family, and threatens the health and wellbeing of millions.

These cuts endanger people's lives. Instead of making health care better or more affordable, Trump is making senseless, chaotic cuts that target women, kids, people battling cancer and other chronic diseases, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and so many more. Trump, Elon, and RFK Jr. aren't just making bad decisions — they're putting lives at risk, and millions of Americans will be left to suffer.

Here's a closer look at what Trump has done and how it'll hurt people:

Women

- **Put women's health efforts at "a major disadvantage":** "Women's health research is already underfunded, under-researched and under-prioritized," Lindsey Miltenberger, chief advocacy officer at the Society for Women's Health Research, tells Women Rule. In the midst of these funding cuts, "women's health research is at a major disadvantage." The 'loss of institutional knowledge ... having fewer staff available to review drugs and medical devices,' as a result of the layoffs, 'will limit federal agencies' abilities to address gaps, including women's health gaps,' Miltenberger adds." [[Politico](#), 4/4/25]
- **Gutted programs around sexual and domestic violence prevention:** "The timing of the layoffs was 'a combination of heartbreaking and insulting,' says Matthew Huffman of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. He says that the current situation is confusing and stressful for local groups, who rely heavily on federal funds for their work. Without federal staff in place to administer the funds and support them, 'it leaves a huge gap in our ability to really be effective.'" [[NPR](#), 4/8/25]
- **Terminated efforts to improve contraceptive practices for women:** "The [fired] staff also worked on contraception guidelines used broadly by clinicians, nurses and midwives. The guidelines spell out safe and effective use of contraception for a variety of medical conditions that may make pregnancy more dangerous." [[Washington Post](#), 4/5/25] "The guidelines can be the difference between these women being able to safely start families or not, and in some cases even

save their lives,’ [one departed staffer] said.” [\[Forbes, 4/14/25\]](#)

- **Eliminated funding for contraception, STI testing, and other women’s health services at Planned Parenthood:** “Cutting Title X funding for Planned Parenthood affiliates will only drive up people’s health care costs, or, frankly, prevent them from accessing health care at all,’ [Rebecca Gibson, CEO of the Planned Parenthood of Great Northwest affiliate] said, adding that her legal team is exploring all options. ‘They want to shut down Planned Parenthood health centers to appease their anti-abortion backers, and they’re willing to take away birth control, cancer screenings and STI testing and treatment to get their way.” [\[Politico, 3/31/25\]](#)

People fighting cancer

- **Cut off care for cancer patients who can’t wait:** “Two patients’ treatments using the experimental therapy had to be delayed because NIH’s capacity to make personalized cell therapies has been slowed by the firing of highly skilled staff and by purchasing slowdowns.” [\[Washington Post, 4/6/25\]](#)
- **Eliminated and delayed research around finding a cure for cancer:** “We’re scared that these blanket mandates could erase decades of progress fighting cancer,’ [Anjee Davis, the CEO of Fight Colorectal Cancer, a patient advocacy group] said. ‘This isn’t about politics. It’s about protecting the progress we’ve fought so hard to achieve in cancer care and research over the past two decades.” [\[CBS News, 4/3/25\]](#)
 - “‘It’s one thing that seems unfair: Why would a metastatic cancer patient need any more stress?’ Phelps said. ‘Why slow down the research when cancer rates are on the rise, particularly with young people under 50?’” [\[Washington Post, 4/6/25\]](#)
- **Jeopardized massive, irreplaceable datasets of cancer research:** “Almost two dozen repositories of research and public health data supported by the National Institutes of Health are marked for “review” under the Trump administration’s direction, and researchers and activists say the data is at risk of being lost forever if the repositories go down.” [\[404, 4/4/25\]](#)

Seniors

- **Dissolved the agency responsible for supporting aging and disabled individuals:** “‘I don’t know what’s going to happen, because, well, we’ve been shut out,’ said a former employee of the Administration for Community Living which was dissolved by Trump’s cuts.” [\[Roll Call, 4/1/25\]](#)
- **Terminated staff administering funding for senior centers and related programs:** “‘The programs that ACL implements improve the lives of literally tens of millions of older adults, people with disabilities and their families and caregivers,’ says Barkoff, now director of a health law program at George Washington University’s Milken Institute School of Public Health. ‘There’s no way to have these [reductions in force] and not impact the programs and the people

who rely on them.” [\[NPR, 4/1/25\]](#)

- **Jeopardized Meals on Wheels with heavy layoffs:** The Meals on Wheels program lost many of the staffers administering it and the distribution of 216 million meals a year to older and disabled people. [\[NPR, 4/1/25\]](#)
- **Halted Alzheimer’s research and fired staff working to improve Alzheimer’s care:** “Among other things, they ensure that people living with dementia, caregivers and health providers have the information, resources and support they need,” [President of the Alzheimer’s Association] said. ‘The programs remain intact, but continuing on a path of reducing staff and resources could cause irreversible damage.’” [\[CBS News, 4/7/25\]](#)
- **Purged experts behind award-winning Parkinson’s research, among others at NIH:** “Multiple sources at the NIH, granted anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media, confirmed Tuesday afternoon that at least 10 principal investigators who were leading and directing medical research at the agency had been fired. Among them is Dr. Richard Youle, a leading researcher in the field of neurodegenerative disorders previously awarded the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences for his groundbreaking research identifying mechanisms behind Parkinson’s disease.” [\[Wired, 4/1/25\]](#)

People with disabilities

- **Obliterated the agency helping people with disabilities live independently:** “The community living administration has focused on ensuring that seniors and people with disabilities can stay in their homes and communities as they age, and it has given \$85 million to centers that help people live independently, among other investments. The funding, which came from stimulus legislation that Trump signed into law in 2020, enabled the centers to provide individuals with prepared meals, personal care items, and help with housing.” [\[KFF News, 4/3/25\]](#)
- **Targeted a program that delivers meals to people with disabilities:** The Meals on Wheels program has been hit with heavy layoffs which jeopardize the distribution of 216 million meals a year for older and disabled people. [\[NPR, 4/1/25\]](#)
- **Eliminated a federal database that tracked the rate of disabilities among adults:** “Researchers and health authorities rely on the data to target resources where they’re needed most, and to study patterns and trends in disabilities.” [\[CBS News, 4/10/25\]](#)

Pregnant women and infants

- **“Obliterated” two of three branches in the CDC’s Division of Reproductive Health:** “‘It certainly appears there was a particular focus on parts of HHS that dealt with women’s or reproductive health,’ said Sean Tipton, chief policy officer at the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, about the cuts.” [\[The Guardian, 4/5/25\]](#) [\[Rolling Stone, 4/5/25\]](#)

- **Fired the CDC's only experts on infertility, days after Trump called himself the "fertilization president":** "I'm astounded, sad, perplexed," said Barbara Collura, president of Resolve: The National Infertility Association. "Infertility impacts one in six people globally, and now we don't have anybody at the CDC who knows anything about infertility and IVF?" [[The Guardian](#), 4/5/25]
- **Eliminated a program that helped IVF couples find the best care:** "[Dr. Nicole Freehill, an OBGYN] also says she was concerned about how cuts to the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) team will affect fertility research. 'That's an ever-changing field, trying to find the best techniques to help patients get pregnant and stay pregnant,' she says. 'A lot of these patients have tried for years, they want to be parents. If this administration is so pro-life, why are they cutting this?'" [[Rolling Stone](#), 4/5/25]
 - "The data is like consumer protection information for fertility patients,' said one of the workers, granted anonymity for fear of retaliation. 'We were putting any information out there that we could that was helpful for couples that are going to spend tens of thousands of dollars investing in what they hope will end up to be a healthy baby.'" [[Politico](#), 4/13/25]
- **Shut down the U.S.'s maternal mortality survey, PRAMS:** "We cannot understand factors associated with poor pregnancy outcomes without surveillance like PRAMS,' said one employee who was laid off in the reproductive health division." [[Washington Post](#), 4/5/25]
- **Laid off staff that oversaw a hotline for new moms seeking mental health support:** "Hotlines that have fielded millions of calls from people — including new mothers — looking for mental health support...are in limbo after federal officials fired the workers who oversaw them." [[Stat](#), 4/3/25]
- **Terminated CDC experts on birth defects and developmental disabilities:** "Kennedy's layoffs wiped out the entire leadership team atop CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, as well as support staff for the center..." [[CBS News](#), 4/10/25]
- **Ripped funding away from community-based maternal health care centers and programs:** "The network of services for mothers and children that [Sevonna Brown, founder of a maternal health program in Brooklyn, NY] had spent more than a decade building was coming to a screeching halt. 'The world has literally gone dark,' she said." [[Forbes](#), 4/14/25]
- **Dissolved an advisory committee on newborn screenings:** "Trump administration terminates advisory committee guiding states on newborn screening for rare genetic diseases." [[Boston Globe](#), 4/5/25]

People battling addiction and mental health issues

- **Fired half of the agency responsible for combating drug overdoses and mental illnesses:** "They worry remaining staff — the agency is now about half the size it was when President

Donald Trump took office — won't be able to administer the block grants to state public health departments, opioid abuse prevention and recovery programs and college suicide prevention initiatives the agency oversees." [[Politico](#), 4/7/25]

- **Terminated research on mental health and substance use among veterans:** "Williams had a grant to investigate how Black and Latino military veterans were accessing treatment for opioid-use disorder, compared with their white peers..." "I am seeing my community of researchers decimated right now," she told me. She was especially close to one of the terminated scientists, a health-systems researcher named Christian Helfrich, who had spent twenty years at the V.A. and who was also affiliated with the university. His work had improved the use of electronic health records and sped up access to care for patients with heart disease. The impact of the layoffs, he said, would be felt for years. "It's preventable suicide deaths going up, substance use going untreated," he told me." [[The New Yorker](#), 4/8/25]
- **Eliminated the office focused on alcohol-related harms and prevention:** "At least 11 states directly relied on the Alcohol Program in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for funding, data assistance and other guidance. The three-person, 24-year-old program was cut..." [[Stat](#), 4/10/25]
- **Gutted tobacco control programs at the CDC and FDA in 'the greatest gift to tobacco industry in the last half-century':** The FDA's top tobacco regulator, Brian King, was let go. Mitch Zeller, the FDA's former tobacco chief, said in an interview, "From a public health perspective it makes absolutely no sense." [[AP](#), 4/1/25] The office leading work on smoking cessation and research into youth tobacco use was also cut. Former CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden called the decision a "gift to Big Tobacco." "The only winner here is the tobacco industry and cancer cells," said Frieden. "If we take our foot off the gas, what do we think will happen?" said a CDC employee fired this week from the agency's Office on Smoking and Health. "Tobacco use rates will increase among youth and fewer adults will quit. Because of that, people will die." [[NBC News](#), 4/3/25]
 - **Immediately after, they regretted their cuts and created more chaos: [The FDA fired its tobacco enforcers. Now it wants them back. - POLITICO](#):** "The Food and Drug Administration earlier this month fired dozens of staffers responsible for going after retailers who illegally sell tobacco to minors. Now it's begging them to come back..." "It's a prescription for allowing retailers to roll the dice and sell to minors with less concern that they will ever be caught," Mitch Zeller, who ran the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products for nearly a decade before retiring in 2022, said of the cuts. "Everybody agrees that retailers should not sell to minors — it doesn't get any more red, white and blue than this program."
 - "Top FDA officials have yet to lay out a long-term plan for ensuring oversight of retailers"

tobacco sales.”

Kids

- **Shut down efforts to prevent school shootings and gun violence:** “One of their projects found that anonymous reporting [on school shootings] used in the North Carolina school system between 2019 to 2023 led to more than 1,000 mental health interventions, more than 100 lives saved from imminent suicide, and 38 acts of school violence prevented, according to a study published in the journal [Pediatrics](#). ‘We know what happened to the staff,’ said one employee. ‘We don’t know what may happen to the funding.’” [[Washington Post](#), 4/5/25]
- **Terminated experts at the Maternal and Child Health Bureau:** “‘Pediatricians, myself included, are losing sleep at night – worried about the health of the nation’s children,’ said Dr Sue Kressly, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics. [[The Guardian](#), 4/5/25]
- **Shut down the CDC office responsible for lead poisoning prevention:** “With 68,000 students in the Milwaukee Public Schools district and dozens of buildings potentially affected, the city’s health commissioner, Dr. Michael Totoraitis, knew that he needed more help, so he reached out to the National Center for Environmental Health, a division of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to make a plan to address the threat...[Two months later] the environmental health team he had been working with at the CDC had been cut.” [[CNN](#), 4/3/25]
- **Dismantled the CDC office for asthma care and control:** “After Hurricane Ian, as Floridians returned home to sodden furniture and moldy piles of debris, many with asthma could feel their chests tightening. To figure out what was safe, some sent their concerns directly to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But on Tuesday — days before floods ravaged Nashville, potentially prompting similar queries — the people who would normally answer such asthma questions stopped working.” [[Stat](#), 4/4/25]
- **Decimated programs for children’s health:** DOGE has terminated millions of dollars grant funding for research covering a number of children’s health issues, including respiratory disease, behavioral health, skeletal problems, and HIV treatment and prevention. [[Forbes](#), 4/14/25]
- **Dismantled offices that administer key child care programs, including Head Start:** “That’s a big deal given that early-childhood programs frequently run on thin margins, so that a delay of even a week or two can cause financial difficulty. ‘You have some Head Start grantees that are pretty small, particularly in rural areas, and they are so reliant on those federal funds,’ Katie Hamm, who as an HHS deputy assistant secretary during the Biden administration oversaw early childhood programs. ‘If they don’t get their federal funding, they can’t make payroll, and if they can’t make payroll, they cannot operate.’” [[Bulwark](#), 4/6/25]
 - Their reckless cuts are already having an impact: [Federal cuts force Head Start program with +400 kids, 70 jobs to close in Eastern WA.](#)

- **Ripped over \$2 billion away from states in child vaccination funding:** “We’re talking about contractors losing their contracts and not being able to get paid, people who were working on vaccination programs not there anymore, and all of the supporting infrastructure that these funds provided evaporated in an instant,” says Josh Michaud, associate director for global health policy at health policy research and news organization KFF.” [[Axios](#), 4/4/25]

People of color

- **Eliminated and delayed research focused on health disparities:** “The Trump administration is canceling dozens of National Institutes of Health grants funding health equity research, including work studying Black maternal and fetal health and HIV.” [[Roll Call](#), 3/24/25] “Paskett says work overcoming disparities in cancer care has dramatically increased survival, yet she worries many voters and politicians may undermine that progress because they don’t understand disparities.” [[NPR](#), 3/18/25]
- **Slashed programs for increasing representation amongst scientists:** “A grant worth more than \$5 million to researchers at Vanderbilt University Medical Center to help ‘achieve more racial and ethnic diversity among our scientific research faculty,’ included a commitment to hire at least 18 tenure-track faculty ‘from minoritized racial and ethnic groups.’” [[Fox News](#), 3/21/25]
- **Targeted areas of health research that have an outsized impact on Black people, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, gun violence:** “‘They went in there and dismantled anything that would help any marginalized community,’ CDC information technology specialist Irismar “Reese” Williams said on Tuesday, after receiving a layoff notice. ‘Make no mistake: This is a direct attack.’” [[Capital B](#), 4/3/25]
- **Halted data collection efforts for studying sickle cell:** “‘If it is not restored, it will disrupt life-saving public health programs, halt critical research, and increase preventable hospitalizations, complications, and deaths. Its elimination runs counter to the Administration’s stated commitment to addressing chronic disease,’ said Dr. Belinda Avalos, president of the American Society of Hematology, in a statement this week.” [[CBS News](#), 4/10/25]

People with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, or dementia

- **Discontinued decades of diabetes research:** “The condition is the nation’s most expensive, affecting 38 million Americans and incurring \$306 billion in one recent year in direct costs. With about 400,000 deaths in 2021, it was the eighth leading cause of death. The program has been terminated, and the reason has little to do with its merits. Instead, it seems to be a matter of a lead researcher’s working in the wrong place at the wrong time.” [[New York Times](#), 4/7/25]
- **Eliminated research on dementia:** “‘Very few studies have blood collected and stored going that far back,’ Dr. Luchsinger said. Now much of the work cannot begin, and the part that had

started remains incomplete.” [[New York Times](#), 4/7/25]

- **Shut down a desperately needed pain research office:** “The [reduction in force enacted last week](#) by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. eliminated all but one full-time position, out of roughly a dozen, within the National Institutes of Health Office of Pain Policy and Planning, a unit devoted to coordinating pain-related research across the federal government. None of the NIH’s 27 institutes focuses specifically on pain, leaving research into both acute and chronic pain, as well as its physiological causes and associated health outcomes, highly fragmented.” [[Stat](#), 4/8/25]
- **Created chaos around research funding in state health departments, universities, and the research community:** “‘There’s a number of studies that were cut that came to our attention and that did not deserve to be cut, and we reinstated them. Our purpose is not to reduce any level of scientific research that’s important,’ Kennedy [said](#) in an interview with CBS News on Wednesday...But government officials later walked back those comments — and have largely stood by the cuts, which hit nearly one-fifth of the workforce at both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration.” [ABC News, 4/10/25]

LGBTQ+ Individuals

- **Targeted research focused on health equity for sexual and gender minorities:** “One project that lost funding was researching connections between HIV and substance use among marginalized communities, according to [The Daily Northwestern](#), which first reported on the cuts.” [[Axios](#), 4/2/25]
- **Promoted offensive views, while defunding nearly every research project on transgender health:** “The White House has directed the [NIH] to focus on studying “regret” after a person transitions to align their body with their gender identity. Several NIH employees, who were granted anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to the press, confirmed the directive to *Nature*.” [[Nature](#), 4/3/25]
- **Erased efforts to track and combat health disparities:** “The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services removed sexual orientation and gender identity questions from enrollment forms for Medicare beneficiaries...Now, the Trump administration’s efforts to strip these demographics from patient forms have reached the private sector...Capturing this information is critical to combat health disparities, experts say.” [[Stat](#), 4/1/25]
- **Gutted HIV prevention efforts and HIV/AIDS research:** “The “reductions in force” last week at the CDC gutted branches responsible for a slew of prevention services: Expert guidance on preventing infant infections, a national at-home testing program, long-running surveys to follow people living with and at risk for HIV, statistical analysis to estimate national HIV incidence, and guidelines on how to use HIV prevention drugs or PrEP, including a powerful new medicine likely to be approved this summer.” [[Stat](#), 4/7/25]

- **Ended a 30-year-old advisory council on HIV/AIDS:** “Carl Schmid, executive director of the HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute and a former PACHA co-chair, said HIV policy in the U.S. is in “crisis mode” after the layoffs. ‘We just don’t know what is happening with HIV in this country anymore,’ he said.” [[Reuters](#), 4/10/25]