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## PPC Update

April 11, 2025

**HHS REORGANIZATION LEAVES MULTIPLE AGENCIES IN LIMBO.** On Thursday, March 27, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced a [major reorganization](#) of the department, with the intention of reducing the department's workforce from 82,000 to 62,000 full-time employees and shrinking the number of divisions from 28 to 15. As part of this much larger reduction in force (RIF), roughly [10,000 HHS employees have been dismissed on top of another 10,000](#) who have already been let go due to their probationary status, are taking an early retirement, or are accepting voluntary separation offers. The reorganization, expected to take effect at the end of May, includes the elimination of a number of agencies and offices within HHS and the closing of nearly half of its regional offices.

Across various HHS agencies, 3,500 employees [have been eliminated](#) from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 2,400 employees were fired from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 300 workers were let go from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and [1,200 staff](#) have been terminated across the National Institutes of Health (NIH). During this most recent RIF, it has been reported that Diana Bianchi, MD, Director of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), [was placed on administrative leave](#) after being offered reassignment to Indian Health Service outposts in other parts of the country. At least three other Institute and Center directors were [similarly removed](#). The staff terminations come after months of uncertainty faced by NIH-funded researchers, following communications freezes that made it difficult to connect with program officers, cancelled study sections, and unexpected grant cancellations. A *Nature* analysis suggests that nearly [800 research projects](#) have already been terminated with impacts being felt in states across the country.

The Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ) was also heavily impacted by this RIF, having lost 100 people out of its 300-person staff. When combined with the number of employees laid off due to their probationary status, [this likely accounts for over half of the agency's workforce](#). The RIFs at AHRQ largely took place across the Office of the Director (excluding the Acting Director), Office of Extramural Research, Education and Priority Populations (OEREP), Center for Evidence and Practice Improvement (CEPI), Office of Communications (OC), and the Office of Management Services (OMS). The Division of Grants Management at OMS, the office responsible for overseeing the review and management of grants at AHRQ, has been dissolved, potentially jeopardizing the agency's ability to assess current and new grant applications.

The FDA Center for Tobacco Products (CTP) Director, Brian King, and the head of CTP's Office of Science were also [removed](#) in a similar fashion. Additionally, CTP's Office of Regulation was disbanded, raising concerns about the center's ability to issue rules in the future. Furthermore, the CDC's Office on

Smoking and Health (OSH), which oversees the National Youth Tobacco Survey, and all staff employed at that office have been terminated. [Two divisions of CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control \(NCIPC\) were also heavily impacted.](#) NCIPC's Division of Violence Prevention, responsible for tackling issues such as adverse childhood experiences, rape prevention education, intimate partner violence, child sexual abuse, and youth and community violence, lost almost all its staff except those in its surveillance branch and some leadership. Furthermore, [nearly 90 percent of the workforce in the Division of Injury Prevention](#), which focused on issues such as traumatic brain injury, suicide prevention, and drowning prevention, saw their jobs eliminated.

A few days after these significant department-wide cuts were announced, [Secretary Kennedy announced that 20 percent of the recently terminated employees at HHS would be rehired.](#) However, HHS has not announced any plans for reinstating any of its staff who were let go as part of the RIFs and [subsequent reporting](#) has cast doubt on whether any rehiring will occur at all. This perplexing back-and-forth has led to significant confusion about which functions that researchers, physicians, and the public rely upon may no longer be performed by HHS. In the meantime, concerns are growing about [risks to health and safety](#) these cuts may soon cause. As agencies navigate this transition, some [fired employees have been asked to temporarily keep working](#) in order to ensure minimal disruptions to agency operations.

**GRANT FUNDING PEDIATRIC SCIENTIST DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM RESCINDED.** On March 21, [NICHD terminated the K12 grant from NICHD that was funding the Pediatric Scientist Development Program \(PSDP\).](#) Established in 1987, the [PSDP](#) has supported the training of pediatricians as physician scientists by offering research opportunities, mentorship, and funding to promote breakthrough advancements in child health research. This rigorous program funds the training of seven to eight pediatricians at university medical centers for one year, matching them with mentors and providing time away from clinical duties to investigate conditions such as obesity, asthma, and chronic kidney disease. The grant has continuously been renewed since its inception and was recently renewed in 2023.

In 2021, after an external review committee recommended that the [program implement recruitment strategies to attract more applicants from diverse backgrounds](#), particularly those from groups that have been underrepresented in biomedical sciences, program leadership rewrote the grant application to incorporate recruitment strategies for diverse scholars. The termination letter stated that the inclusion of diversity made the grant out of line with administration priorities and that “no modification of the project could align the project with agency priorities.” The cancellation of this funding threatens the viability of a program that has played a crucial role in bolstering the pediatrician scientist pipeline and ultimately helping children in the form of scientific advances to treat serious health conditions.

— **Advocacy Opportunity.** If you are experiencing direct impacts because of the rescission of the PSDP, now is a great opportunity to reach out to your members of Congress. Check out this [advocacy toolkit](#) to learn how you can use your voice to educate your lawmakers about the impact of these cuts.