

Internal budget document reveals extent of Trump's proposed health cuts

HHS would be asked to absorb a \$40 billion cut, about one-third of its discretionary budget.

April 16, 2025 Washington Post

By [Lena H. Sun](#), [Carolyn Y. Johnson](#), [Rachel Roubein](#), [Joel Achenbach](#) and [Lauren Weber](#)

The Trump administration is seeking to deeply slash budgets for federal health programs, a roughly one-third cut in discretionary spending by the Department of Health and Human Services, according to a preliminary budget document obtained by The Washington Post.

The HHS budget draft, known as a “passback,” offers the first full look at the health and social service priorities of President Donald Trump’s Office of Management and Budget as it prepares to send his 2026 fiscal year budget request to Congress. It shows how the Trump administration plans to reshape the federal health agencies that oversee food and drug safety, manage the nation’s response to infectious-disease threats and drive biomedical research.

It calls not only for cuts, but a major shuffling and restructuring of health and human service agencies.

Agencies are allowed to appeal to HHS for changes, but have been told they cannot change the bottom line, according to a federal health official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the negotiations.

While Congress often ignores the president’s budget request, this has not been a typical transition to a new administration. Trump and his allies in Congress have made clear they want to smash the status quo by drastically reducing the size of the federal government and scrubbing it of programs and research efforts seen as wasteful or contrary to administration priorities.

The administration already has downsized HHS by about one-fourth of its workforce, with about 20,000 departures since Trump took office. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention staff who worked on programs to prevent drowning and gun violence, improve worker safety and test for sexually transmitted illnesses and hepatitis were among those laid off.

National Institutes of Health staffers who specialize in managing scientific funding have been ordered to terminate contracts and cancel hundreds of grants that fund research on topics such as vaccine hesitancy, transgender health and covid.

HHS had a discretionary budget of about \$121 billion in fiscal 2024, but under the Trump administration’s preliminary outline, it would see a decrease to \$80 billion.

Spokespeople for the White House and HHS did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

- The proposal would reduce the more than \$47 billion budget of the NIH to \$27 billion — a roughly 40 percent cut. It would consolidate NIH’s 27 institutes and centers into just eight. Some of its institutes and centers would be eliminated, including the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities and the National Institute of Nursing Research.

- A new, \$20 billion agency named the Administration for a Healthy America would be created. AHA would include many pieces of other agencies that are being consolidated — such as those focused on primary care, environmental health and HIV.
- AHA would have \$500 million in policy, research and evaluation funding to be allocated by HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to support “Make America Healthy Again” initiatives, including a focus on childhood chronic diseases. But many specific programs would be eliminated under AHA, according to the document, including programs focused on preventing childhood lead poisoning, bolstering the health-care workforce, advancing rural health initiatives and maintaining a registry of patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS.
- The proposal would fund the Food and Drug Administration at a level that allows it to continue to collect drug and medical device fees from the industries the agency regulates. Unless the agency is funded at a certain level, the FDA’s ability to use these funds, which help expedite safety reviews for devices, drugs and other products, would be limited.
- The proposal would cut the CDC’s budget by about 44 percent, from \$9.2 billion to about \$5.2 billion, and would eliminate all of the agency’s chronic disease programs and domestic HIV work. The chronic disease programs being eliminated include work on heart disease, obesity, diabetes and smoking cessation.
- Rural programs formerly under the Health Resources and Services Administration appear to be hard-hit. The rural hospital flexibility grants, state offices of rural health, rural residency development program and at-risk rural hospitals program grants are listed as eliminations under AHA.
- Funding for the Head Start program, which provides early child care and education for low-income families and is funded by HHS’s Administration for Children and Families, would be eliminated. “The federal government should not be in the business of mandating curriculum, locations and performance standards for any form of education,” the document says.

“President Trump has committed to balancing the budget while providing adequate funding for critical nondefense discretionary priorities — securing our borders, caring for our veterans, and continued infrastructure investment,” the document states in an introduction.

“Reaching balance requires: resetting the proper balance between federal and state responsibilities with a renewed emphasis on federalism; eliminating the federal government’s support of woke ideology; protecting the American people by deconstructing a wasteful and weaponized bureaucracy; and identifying and eliminating wasteful spending.”

It is unclear which proposed cuts will stand in the budget proposal to Congress — and whether lawmakers will accept them. During the first Trump administration, Congress rejected some of the administration’s proposals, including a 20 percent cut to NIH.

But those who depend on this funding said the cuts would pose an existential threat to some programs.

“It would be catastrophic,” said Tommy Sheridan, deputy director of the National Head Start Association. “More than a million parents wouldn’t be able to go to work from all those children, or they would have to scramble to find some other type of option. In a lot of communities, Head Start is the only early childhood provider in the community — especially rural America.”

Alan Morgan, chief executive of the National Rural Health Association, said rural residents would suffer if the health initiatives proposed for elimination were cut.

“Those are essential to ensuring access to care for rural Americans and critical to keeping rural hospitals open,” he said. “If that would come to fruition it would be absolute shocking news, because these programs have had such bipartisan support,” he added, noting Kennedy himself had expressed support for the importance of rural hospitals.