



Highlights of [GAO-06-1092T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Responders to the World Trade Center (WTC) attack—individuals involved in rescue, recovery, or cleanup—included New York City Fire Department (FDNY) personnel, federal government workers, and others from New York and elsewhere. They were exposed to numerous hazards, and concerns remain about the long-term effects on their physical and mental health.

In February 2006, GAO testified that four of the five key federally funded programs that were monitoring health effects in responders had made progress but that the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) WTC Federal Responder Screening Program, implemented by the Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness (OPHEP), lagged behind ([GAO-06-481T](#)). GAO also reported that the Congress appropriated \$75 million in December 2005 to HHS's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for monitoring and treatment for responders and that CDC was deciding how to allocate the funds.

This statement updates GAO's February 2006 testimony. GAO examined (1) progress made by HHS's WTC federal responder program and (2) actions CDC has taken to award the \$75 million appropriated. GAO reviewed program documents and interviewed HHS officials and others involved in WTC monitoring and treatment programs.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-1092T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cynthia A. Bascetta at (202) 512-7101 or bascettac@gao.gov.

HHS Has Screened Additional Federal Responders for World Trade Center Health Effects, but Plans for Awarding Funds for Treatment Are Incomplete

What GAO Found

The WTC federal responder program has registered and screened additional federal responders since February 2006, and arrangements are being developed to screen responders who are former federal workers residing outside the New York area. An additional 1,385 federal responders have registered for screening, including 1,134 current federal workers and 251 former federal workers, bringing the total number registered as of late August 2006 to 1,762, including 283 former federal workers. Because the total number of federal responders is uncertain, the proportion of the total who have registered is unknown. As of late August 2006, Federal Occupational Health Services (FOH) had completed screening of 907 federal workers, 380 of whom were screened since February 2006. Under an OPHEP agreement with CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), former federal workers are being screened through the worker and volunteer WTC program, one of the five key federally funded programs. As of July 31, 2006, the worker and volunteer WTC program provided screenings to 13 former federal workers and scheduled 11 more, and 139 former workers had been screened by FOH as part of the 907 workers. Most of the former federal workers reside outside the New York area, where the worker and volunteer WTC program is located, and NIOSH is working to establish a national network of providers to screen these workers.

CDC has awarded a small portion of the \$75 million appropriated for screening, monitoring, and treatment and plans to make decisions about treatment coverage before awarding most of the funds. The agency plans to award the \$75 million to the five organizations that the law identified as having priority for funding. CDC officials expect to make awards to the WTC Health Registry, the Police Organization Providing Peer Assistance (the POPPA program), and the New York City Police Foundation's Project COPE over a 3-year period and to award funds to the FDNY WTC and worker and volunteer WTC programs in response to the treatment costs they incur. CDC officials have a proposed spending plan that allocates about \$53.5 million for the latter two programs' treatment costs, but the officials told GAO that because they are uncertain about how quickly treatment costs could deplete the available funds, they may need to make adjustments. Officials from the FDNY WTC and worker and volunteer WTC programs told GAO that they anticipated that their estimated portion of the funds would be depleted well before the end of 3 years. As of August 2006, CDC awarded about \$4.5 million of the \$75 million: about \$1.9 million to the WTC Health Registry, \$1.5 million to the FDNY WTC program, and almost \$1.1 million to the worker and volunteer WTC program. In addition, CDC expects to award \$1.5 million to the POPPA program and \$3 million to Project COPE in September 2006. CDC is waiting to make further awards until it has reached certain decisions about the coverage of treatment services, such as which prescription drugs would be covered. CDC expects to begin making further awards around February 2007.