

National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness

Highlights: Following the two Executive Orders (EOs) released from the Biden Administration on Inauguration Day, President Biden signed seven additional health care related EOs, and released a memo and a directive, as well as the complete COVID-19 National Strategic Plan to support the national response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Takeaways:

- **Tone and Direction of COVID-19 Response:** Tone of urgency set. Many actions require additional guidance, regulation, and funding to support their implementation.
- **National COVID-19 Response Coordinator:** Jeff Zients has been named to this position.
- **Deployment of National Guard:** FEMA funding increased to cover 100% of costs for National Guard deployment to states to aid in the distribution of vaccines helping to coordinate logistics, provide additional transportation needs and administer the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Data Reporting:** Evaluation COVID-19 data reporting to increase understanding of disease spread and impact.
- **National Stockpile:** Evaluation of current levels of critical supplies, and if necessary, invoke the Defense Production Act.
- **Vaccine Outreach and Education:** To regain trust, launching of an outreach campaign to promote the importance of the COVID-19 vaccine.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Title	Signed	Description
Organizing and Mobilizing the United States Government to Provide a Unified and Effective Response to Combat COVID-19 and to Provide United States Leadership on Global Health and Security	1/20/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established the position of Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response and Counselor to the President, who is responsible for coordinating efforts to ensure timely and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, to safely reopen schools, expand testing efforts, and coordinate with state, local, Tribal and territorial authorities. • Reestablished the National Security Council Directorate on Global Health Security and Biodefense, an office disbanded by the Trump Administration, and requires coordinated efforts to evaluate current national biopreparedness policies.
Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing	1/20/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires all federal employees and contractors and all individuals on federal property to wear masks, maintain social distancing and adhere to other public health measures as established in guidelines released by the CDC.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes the Task Force to provide guidance to heads of agencies on the continued efforts by the federal government to maintain the safety of federal employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Priorities	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directs the Secretary of Education, in consultation to the HHS Secretary, to provide evidence-based guidance on re-opening, including in-person learning at institutions of higher education Directs the Secretary of Education to advise on distance and online learning, develop a Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse, and provide technical assistance to schools and higher ed institutions to ensure high-quality learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a report on the disparate impacts of COVID-19 on students Facilitates data collection to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and educators Directs HHS Secretary to facilitate data collection to inform reopening, ensure COVID-19 related supplies are equitably allocated, support contact tracing programs, and guide for childcare providers and Head Start programs. Requires the Secretaries of Education and HHS to submit a report identifying strategies to address the impact of COVID-19 on educational outcomes. Encourages the FCC to increase connectivity options for students lacking reliable home broadband
Ensuring a Data-Driven Response to COVID-19 and Future High Consequence Public Health Threats	1/21/21	<p>Purpose: to increase national capabilities to instill data driven policies by directing federal agencies to enhance the collection, production sharing and analysis of COVID-19 data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each agency is required to identify a senior official to consult with the COVID-19 Response Coordinator to make the data publicly available. HHS Secretary will review the effectiveness, interoperability and connectivity of the collection of public health data related to the COVID-19 pandemic and issue a report with recommendations for improvement.
Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directs federal agencies to implement policies requiring face masks in airports, and on planes, trains, and other forms of public transportation. Require a negative COVID-19 test prior to departure and quarantine upon arrival for all international travel. COVID-19 Response Coordinator is responsible for EO coordination / implementation.
Establishing the COVID-19 Pandemic Testing Board and Ensuring a Sustainable Public Health Workforce for COVID-19 and Other Biological Threats	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established the COVID-19 Pandemic Testing Board to create and implement a unified approach to testing and oversee the testing supply chain. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals: (1) promote increased diagnostic, screening and surveillance testing, (2) make recommendations to the President to expand testing, and (3) identify access barriers to testing for priority populations, communities with shortages, high-risk populations and at-risk settings. Composition: COVID-19 Response Coordinator and representatives from each of the relevant agencies. Requires the Secretaries of HHS, Treasury, and Labor and the COVID-19 Response Coordinator to ensure access to testing for those without health insurance and clarify coverage for testing for private health plans. Requires Secretaries to coordinate with state and local officials to identify challenges in recruiting and training personnel and provide technical support and training assistance. Directs the Secretaries of HHS, Homeland Security, Labor, and Education, in collaboration with the COVID-19 Response Coordinator and other Administrative offices, to submit a plan to establish:

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (1) a national contract tracing ○ (2) COVID-19 public health workforce program, referred to as U.S. Public Health Job Corps
Improving and Expanding Access to Care and Treatment for COVID-19	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Requires the Secretaries of Defense, HHS, and Veterans Affairs to provide surge capacity assistance for critical care and long-term care facilities. ● Directs HHS Secretary and NIH Director to develop a strategic plan to support the development of novel treatments for COVID-19. The strategic plan must support a range of studies including, evaluating the most promising COVID-19 treatments, COVID-19 and rural health, and the long-term impacts of COVID-19. ● To facilitate equitable and effective distribution of currently available COVID-19 treatments, directs Secretaries to evaluate public and private coverage of treatments and take the available steps needed to ensure coverage for COVID-19 treatments and to evaluate the COVID-19 Uninsured Program operated by HRSA to ensure adequate access to treatment for patients without health insurance.
A Sustainable Public Health Supply Chain	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Directs the Secretaries of State, Defense, HHS, and Homeland Security, in coordination with the COVID-19 Response Coordinator, to review the availability of critical supplies and assess whether industry can appropriately respond to identified shortages. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If industry unable to provide necessary supplies, directs agencies to use legal authorities, such as the Defense Production Act, to fill those shortfalls. ○ Provide report of the supply stockpile evaluation. ○ Provide information about the reasonableness of the pricing of pandemic response supplies that are identified as being scarce materials or supplies which could be threatened by hoarding or price gouging. ● Directs the Secretaries to establish a Pandemic Supply Chain Resilience Strategy within 180 days including information about how to respond to emergency supply needs and the equitable distribution of such supplies.
Protecting Worker Health and Safety	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Directs OSHA to provide updated guidance to protect workers from COVID-19 exposures. ● Within 2 weeks of EO issuance, Secretary of Labor will provide revised guidance for employers on workplace safety during the pandemic. ● Secretary must launch a national program focused on COVID-19 violations that put the greatest number of workers at risk and review state OSHA plans to ensure appropriate COVID-19 protections and work with states without such plans to increase protections for public sector workers.
Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishes a COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force to focus on ensuring an equitable national COVID-19 response. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Composition: HHS Secretary, Task Force Chair designated by the Secretary, heads of other agencies or offices, and 20 non-federal members appointed by the President. ○ Charge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide recommendations to the COVID-19 Response Coordinator about the distribution and allocation of resources, funding, and how the government can provide culturally competent effective communication and messaging for underserved and minority populations related to COVID-19. ▪ Directs development of recommendations for improving data collection for underserved communities. ○ Stakeholder input: When developing recommendations, directed to engage with policy experts, health professionals, community organizations, and state, local, and tribal leaders.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directs HHS Secretary to conduct an outreach campaign to promote vaccine trust and uptake among communities of color and other underserved populations.
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MEMORANDUM

Title	Signed	Description
Extend Federal Support to Governors' Use of National Guard to Respond to COVID-19 and to Increase Reimbursement and other Assistance Provided to States	1/21/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directs the Secretary of Defense to deploy the National Guard for the purposes of supporting state, local and tribal emergency assistance under the Stafford Act. • Directs FEMA to fund 100% of the cost associated with COVID-19 activities through September 30, 2021. • Directs FEMA to expedite reimbursement for eligible emergency COVID-19 work projects.

DIRECTIVE

Title	Signed	Description
National Security Directive on United States Global Leadership to Strengthen the International COVID-19 Response and to Advance Global Health Security and Biological Preparedness	1/21/21	<p>As background, on January 20, 2021, the US rejoined the World Health Organization (WHO).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, heads of agencies and the COVID-19 Response Coordinator to provide a report within 30 days on how the US can exercise leadership within the WHO, advance global public health and strengthen the goals of the WHO. • Announced the intent for the US to engage in global efforts to expand access to vaccines and support global health efforts.