

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



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CMS Should Take Additional Actions To Help Hospitals Prepare for a Future Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreak

Why OIG Did This Audit

- Hospitals that cannot control the spread of emerging infectious diseases within their facilities risk spreading diseases to patients, staff, and the community. This is the second OIG audit of [CMS](#) controls related to hospital preparedness for emerging infectious diseases.
- Our prior audit assessed the design and implementation of CMS controls. This audit assessed the operating effectiveness of CMS controls related to emerging infectious disease outbreaks.

What OIG Found

Although CMS took significant actions to help hospitals prepare for a future emerging infectious disease outbreak, we identified gaps in CMS controls that could negatively affect hospital preparedness during a future event with a scope and duration similar to COVID-19. Specifically:

- CMS did not ensure that surveyors were trained to cover key planning areas for an emerging infectious disease outbreak.
- CMS did not ensure that hospital emergency preparedness plans met the needs of all at-risk patient populations.
- CMS's guidance did not address the mental health of hospital frontline staff as part of hospital emergency preparedness planning.

What OIG Recommends

We made five recommendations to CMS, including that it collaborate with its emergency preparedness partners to expand surveyor training, require that hospital accreditation organization standards and survey processes cover the needs of people from all at-risk patient populations, and encourage hospitals to take into consideration the mental health of hospital frontline staff as part of emergency preparedness planning. The full recommendations appear in the report.

CMS concurred with all five recommendations, with some limitations, and described actions it plans to take in response to our recommendations.