

Report in Brief

Date: September 2023

Report No. A-05-22-00010

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Why OIG Did This Audit

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) program provides strategic investments through its cooperative agreement with health departments aimed at reducing domestic infectious disease-related illnesses and death.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provided relief to address the continued impact of COVID-19 on the economy, public health, State and local governments, individuals, and businesses. CDC provided \$10 billion in ARP funding to 64 ELC recipients to support COVID-19 screening testing for teachers, staff, and students in K-12 school settings.

Our objective was to determine what oversight and assistance CDC provided to assist ELC recipients in implementing COVID-19 screening testing programs.

How OIG Did This Audit

We reviewed information the ELC recipients were required to report during the project period of April 2021 through July 2023 and determined the programmatic and financial oversight CDC provided to support the ELC Reopening Schools project. In addition, we reviewed the technical assistance, implementation tools, and resources CDC provided to ELC recipients in implementing the COVID-19 screening testing programs.

CDC Provided Oversight and Assistance; However, ELC Recipients Still Faced Challenges in Implementing COVID-19 Screening Testing Programs

What OIG Found

We found that CDC provided oversight and assistance to the ELC recipients in implementing the COVID-19 screening testing programs, by utilizing recipient data and conducting periodic outreach through webinars and technical assistance calls, among other things. However, based on the ELC recipients' responses to the OIG survey, we identified challenges the ELC recipients encountered in implementing the ELC screening testing programs within their jurisdictions. Some of the ELC recipients encountered challenges expending the ELC Reopening Schools funding, such as barriers from schools in implementing the screening testing programs in their districts, while others used alternative sources of government funding in the implementation of the screening testing programs. In addition, some of the ELC recipients encountered challenges implementing the ELC screening testing programs, including: (1) lack of interest from the schools and communities, (2) limitations on the costs that were allowable under the terms and conditions of the awards, (3) insufficient school staffing and resources, and (4) issues with vendors or contractors. The challenges that were identified in implementing the screening testing programs from the survey of ELC recipients provide CDC with areas to focus on when implementing future ELC programs.

What OIG Recommends

The report includes no recommendations. However, we expect that CDC will use the suggestions and feedback from the ELC recipients' responses to the OIG survey to improve development of ELC programs that are in response to future public health emergencies. CDC elected not to provide formal written comments on our draft report but did provide technical comments, which we addressed as appropriate.