

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-178](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In fiscal year 2016, approximately 900,000 workers were trained through OSHA's Outreach Training Program, the agency's primary mechanism for training workers on the basics of occupational safety and health. OSHA offers this training through OSHA-authorized in-person and online training providers. GAO was asked to review OSHA's administration of the program.

GAO examined (1) the extent to which the program aligns with leading practices in designing an effective training program, (2) the process for documenting successful completion of the training and whether internal controls are in place to assure completion is accurately documented, and (3) how OSHA oversees training providers and assesses the results of the program. GAO compared OSHA's design and evaluation efforts for its training program with leading practices in GAO's training guide (GAO-04-546G) and federal internal control standards, and analyzed fiscal year 2012-2016 OSHA data (the most recent available) on time frames for processing completion card requests from online training providers. GAO also interviewed all nine online training providers and five in-person training providers, selected for having a high number of participants in fiscal year 2015, as well as OSHA officials.

GAO is not making recommendations in this report.

View [GAO-17-178](#). For more information, contact Allison Bawden at (202) 512-7215 or bawdena@gao.gov.

February 2017

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH

Information on OSHA Training for Workers on Workplace Hazards

What GAO Found

The Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Outreach Training Program—which offers training on job hazard recognition and avoidance—reflects many of the attributes of a well-designed training program identified in GAO's training guide. OSHA is not required to follow GAO's training guide; however, the program's design reflects at least one indicator for six of the seven attributes of a well-designed training program GAO has identified. For example, OSHA used an appropriate mix of centralized and decentralized approaches by developing core learning objectives and content requirements for the courses but allowed training providers to modify the curriculum to meet the specific needs of their audience. In addition, OSHA officials told GAO that they took into account the leading causes of worker deaths and the most common workplace safety and health violations to determine topics to be covered in the training.

OSHA documents successful course completion differently depending on whether training was delivered in-person or online, but it uses the same controls to prevent fraudulent completion cards from being issued. OSHA officials and the training providers GAO interviewed reported using several checks to prevent fraudulent completion cards from being issued, such as verifying course completion through automated and manual processes and comparing the number of cards requested to the number of registered students. Although OSHA does not require workers to complete Outreach Training, some workers may need to show proof of completion to satisfy requirements by their states, municipalities, employers, or unions. To obtain completion cards, Outreach trainers who deliver in-person training submit course information through a web-based system, while online training providers mail documentation to OSHA. OSHA processed 91 percent of the card requests from online training providers within 2 weeks, which is within the 30-day deadline OSHA has set for itself, according to GAO's analysis of OSHA data. OSHA officials reported that they plan to allow all training providers to request completion cards electronically, but the agency has not established a timeline for implementing this new process. According to OSHA officials, the agency is taking steps to modify its process for selecting online training providers and plans to incorporate electronic requests for completion cards into the new process.

OSHA oversees the performance of training providers by routinely collecting and assessing data and investigating complaints and has taken some steps to assess the results of the program. Specifically, OSHA collects data from the training providers to help ensure that the training meets the program requirements and that the trainers are delivering the Outreach Training courses as intended. OSHA also investigates complaints it receives about training providers, including issues such as the trainer not spending enough time on required safety topics. To assess program results, OSHA tracks the number of workers who take the Outreach Training courses to measure the reach of the program. According to OSHA data, from fiscal year 2000 to fiscal year 2016, the number of workers trained more than quadrupled from 200,522 to 900,010. OSHA also receives test results and student evaluations of the courses from some of the Outreach Training providers.