The CARES Act includes a provision for GAO to conduct monitoring and oversight of the federal government's preparedness for, response to, and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including issues related to public health, the economy, and federal spending. To fulfill this role, GAO reports periodically on these matters. The act also asks GAO to conduct a review of federal contracting under CARES Act authorities and report annually on programs that provide loans, loan guarantees, and other assistance to companies under the act.

GAO was provided a total of $107 million to carry out this real-time oversight for the Congress. Of this total, GAO has expended about $63 million as of March 10, 2022. This document summarizes the key results of this oversight.

For additional information, visit www.gao.gov/coronavirus

141 PRODUCTS ISSUED, MARCH 1, 2020 - MARCH 1, 2022
► 9 comprehensive reports on federal COVID-19 response
► 101 reports on specific aspects of federal response
► 21 congressional testimonies
► 10 science and technology spotlights

276 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AGENCIES & CONGRESS
► Spanning 22 agencies and covering public health, service delivery, the economy, and program integrity
► Includes 21 new recommendations that GAO made in January and February 2022
► Agencies have partially or fully implemented over one-third of GAO’s recommendation as of March 8, 2022

For example, GAO recommended the Small Business Administration assess and address fraud risks in its Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Paycheck Protection Programs, key pandemic assistance programs that have provided billions of dollars to small businesses and nonprofits. SBA agreed with our recommendations.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

GAO’s work is making a difference. For example, in response to GAO’s recommendations, agencies have improved transparency and strengthened programs by improving their use of data:

► The Department of Health and Human Services required nursing homes to report the COVID-19 vaccination status of residents and staff. This information is now publicly available online for over 15,000 Medicare and Medicaid certified nursing homes, aiding in transparency and identifying facilities that may be in need of additional assistance and resources.

► The Department of Veterans Affairs is tracking vaccine administration for veterans and targeting outreach to improve completion of vaccine regimens. VA’s Veteran Outreach Tool—which according to VA providers use for veteran outreach and scheduling—includes data on vaccination status, such as if a veteran received a vaccine from VA or an outside provider, and if a veteran is overdue for a second dose.

HIGH-RISK DESIGNATION

► GAO’s January 2022 comprehensive report designated HHS’s leadership and coordination of a range of public health emergencies as high risk, in order for it to receive sustained attention from the executive branch and Congress.

► For more than a decade, GAO has reported on HHS’s execution of its lead role in preparing for, and responding to, a range of public health emergencies and has found persistent deficiencies in its ability to perform this role. These deficiencies have hindered the nation’s response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and past threats, including other infectious diseases and extreme weather events.

► As of January 2022, GAO has made 115 recommendations related to HHS’ leadership and coordination of public health emergencies since 2007. Of the 72 recommendations that remain open, 49 (68 percent) stem from the COVID-19 pandemic. GAO will continue to monitor HHS’s efforts to address public health emergencies.

ISSUED WORK

GAO’s recently issued work related to COVID-19 includes the following reports:

► COVID-19: Significant Improvements Are Needed For Overseeing Relief Funds And Leading Responses To Public Health Emergencies, GAO-22-105291

► Housing Finance System: Future Reforms Should Consider Past Plans And Vulnerabilities Highlighted By Pandemic, GAO-22-104284

► COVID-19: HHS And DOD Transitioned Vaccine Responsibilities To HHS, But Need To Address Outstanding Issues, GAO-22-104453

► COVID-19: Federal Efforts To Provide Vaccines To Racial And Ethnic Groups, GAO-22-105079

► Tribal Epidemiology Centers: HHS Actions Needed To Enhance Data Access, GAO-22-104698

ONGOING WORK

GAO’s 68 ongoing engagements related to COVID-19 includes audits on:

► COVID-19 in Nursing Homes: Data and Challenges
► Financial Regulatory Oversight During COVID-19
► Aviation Contact Tracing