

A Synopsis of the 2021 HHS Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan

In 2021, HHS established the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) in accordance with Executive Order 14008 (Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad). This Executive Order sets forth a government-wide approach to address the effects of the climate crisis, part of which is accomplished through the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan. Each government agency was required to develop their own CARP and establish an agency champion to lead these efforts. The purpose of the CARP is to increase the resilience and adaptability of government programs to climate change and to establish initial actions towards meeting established goals.

To facilitate knowledge of the 2021 HHS CARP, a high-level summary has been provided below. This summary highlights the critical aspects of the document that may be important to HHS staff. For the full document, please visit www.sustainability.gov.

HHS Chief Climate Action Officer (CCAO): Mr. Garey Rice

Top Five HHS Priorities for Climate Adaptation and Climate Resilience:

1. Expanding Health Programs Implementation for Climate Adaptation

This section highlights the efforts required by the NIH and the CDC to help the nation prepare for the health impacts of the climate crisis. This will primarily involve expanding existing programs for climate change-related health and biomedical research activities. Research will focus on identifying potential health effects associated with the climate crisis and implementing health adaptation plans to combat these effects.

2. Improve HHS Responses to the Climate Crisis

This section lays the foundation for HHS to support the creation and implementation of OpDiv/StaffDiv Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plans. The newly formed Office of Climate Change and Health Equity (OCCHE) and the Office of Assistant Secretary for Administration (ASA) will create templates for these Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plans and provide subject matter expertise during their development.

3. Develop Climate-Resilient Grant Policies at HHS

This section sets the guidance for developing grant policies across HHS that advance federal sustainability and climate resilience goals. HHS is the largest grant-making agency in the United States. The added grant language will promote energy and water efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce waste generation, implement climate resiliency planning and more.

4. Climate Resilience by Optimizing Workforce and Operational Footprint through Space Management

This section outlines the ways HHS is re-examining and re-imagining its utilization of space, both during normal and crisis situations. By adopting a new space strategy, HHS can improve the health and welfare of its workforce, while also increasing space efficiency, reducing commuting time and expanding its workforce to new localities. This will create a flexible, distributed, technology enabled, climate-ready workforce.

5. Promoting Sustainable and Climate Resilient Operations at HHS Facilities

This section calls for HHS facilities to update their policy manuals and guidance documents to address sustainability and climate resilience. Since climate change effects will vary on a local/regional level, each HHS facility must address its projected impacts on an individual level. This requires updates to facility documents to address climate change for each of HHS' owned and leased facilities.

Other Priorities from the CARP:

1. Update Climate Vulnerability Assessments

This section outlines the five key climate vulnerabilities for HHS: heat, extreme weathers, wildfires, drought and flooding. Each of these vulnerabilities are addressed separately with their expected impacts and the actions required to mitigate these impacts. For example, additional HVAC capabilities will be required to maintain cool indoor temperatures during the longer and more intense heat waves caused by climate change. The required action is to build resilience into building HVAC systems to handle the increased cooling demands.

2. Describe Agency Efforts to Enhance Climate Literacy in its Management Workforce

This section outlines the vision and formation of the HHS Climate Literacy Team. The goal of this team is to increase basic climate literacy throughout HHS including the relationship between climate and health and the effect of climate change on the HHS mission. Current resources for climate literacy like webpages, trainings and outreach events will be evaluated and expanded upon to meet the new climate literacy goals.

3. Describe Agency Actions to Enhance Climate Resilience

This section describes the plans for HHS to ensure climate-ready facilities and supply of products and services. All new and existing facilities and sites will be planned, designed, constructed, and/or renovated with resiliency towards climate change as a key element. Sustainability features of facilities and sites will also be prioritized to minimize the impacts of HHS operations on climate change. HHS must also ensure climate-robust supplies of critical goods and services for these five categories: medical supplies, utilities, vivarium support services, medical supplies stockpile warehouse, and vaccines.