

CDC's Global Health Center

America's first line of defense from global health threats

How does the Global Health Center tackle emerging health threats?

Today's global health challenges require collaboration and coordination with a wide variety of partners to advance the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) work of protecting Americans and saving lives around the world. The Global Health Center (GHC) at CDC deploys its robust capabilities and extensive coordination with other centers at the agency to stop health threats at their source before they spread to the United States and other countries.

By leveraging longstanding global partnerships and the agency's unique scientific and technical capacities, CDC accomplishes more than any one organization or institution can on its own. The global health work that GHC carries out focuses on diseases, health threats, and conditions that are major causes of death, disease, and disability for Americans, building on our domestic public health program expertise and knowledge of these diseases to help us protect the United States from major health threats, wherever they arise.

GHC provides expertise on immunization, disease eradication, and public health capacity-building around the globe through its Divisions of Global HIV and TB, Global Public Health Protection, and Global Immunization. As a global hub for infectious disease work, CDC is uniquely equipped to develop and validate tools for disease surveillance and diagnosis. CDC's global health work acts as a force multiplier beyond just a singular disease or program.

GHC's areas of expertise
Prevention Addresses health threats abroad to understand disease transmission and refine medical countermeasures to protect Americans if outbreaks spread to the United States.
Surveillance Manages early warning systems that allow CDC to continuously track, monitor, and rapidly identify outbreaks that pose a health security threat to the United States.
Laboratories Strengthens the speed and ability of labs to identify deadly pathogens that threaten the United States and the world to prevent further spread.
Response Manages CDC headquarters and overseas offices that can pivot staff, public health programs, and platforms to respond immediately when outbreaks begin, using enhanced expertise to stop health threats.
Workforce Trains the world's leading disease detectives to manage global health threats from any pathogens by investigating outbreaks in real time, identifying threats, and preventing spread.

One example of this is how CDC works with host country governments to establish state-of-the-art laboratories, to develop world-class laboratory-based surveillance systems, and to strengthen local capacity, laying the groundwork for effective HIV and tuberculosis (TB) detection, prevention, and treatment programs. This infrastructure is also leveraged as an efficient vehicle for tackling emerging health threats before they reach the United States. It was this interconnected structure that played a pivotal role in strengthening Rwanda's public health capabilities, which the country effectively leveraged during its response to the first reported case of Marburg virus, which causes severe disease akin in Ebola, in September 2024. Within 72 hours of notification by the Rwandan government, CDC deployed subject matter experts on the ground, demonstrating a swift, coordinated response that also safeguarded the United States against potential imported cases.

GHC by the numbers

- Conducted, working through CDC country offices, more than **250 infectious disease outbreak investigations globally in 2024 alone**, including 15 outbreaks of hemorrhagic fevers (like Ebola), 17 cholera outbreaks, 84 polio outbreaks, 2 hepatitis outbreaks, 6 mpox outbreaks, 6 respiratory clusters, 59 measles outbreaks, and 70 other infectious diseases.
- Averts more than **50,000 paralytic polio cases** and **\$2 billion in associated health care costs** annually in the United States
- Trained more than **25,000 disease detectives** in more than 90 countries.
- Monitors more than **40 global health threats daily**.
- Collaborates with **190 countries to strengthen laboratory detection** of diseases and emerging pathogens.
- Has more than **100 active global responses in 40 countries** as of 2025.

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By leveraging these core public health capabilities, GHC serves as a coordinating mechanism for the vast global health work carried out across the entire agency. CDC's coordinated approach to global health is critical to connecting CDC's domestic expertise to its global impact. Through institutional knowledge, collaboration across borders, multipurpose laboratories, in-depth surveillance, and more, GHC aligns and manages CDC's global health programs across infectious diseases, noncommunicable diseases, laboratory systems, and workforce development to fit each piece of the puzzle together to keep US citizens safe.



In action: GHC as a coordinating mechanism

CDC program/division	Scope	Coordination with GHC
Advanced Molecular Detection Program (AMD)	AMD—under the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID)—uses DNA sequencing and advanced computing technologies to study infectious diseases, revealing insights that are critical to developing diagnostics, drugs, and vaccines. AMD works with experts across CDC to ensure the United States has the infrastructure and technology to protect Americans from emerging health threats by facilitating the development and pilot testing of next-generation diagnostic tests and protocols to improve investigative capabilities throughout the nation.	In 2014, CDC began applying AMD methods to improve its ability to detect and confirm new polio infections. These techniques reduced the time for poliovirus strain identification from one week to just a few hours, helping speed up responses and ultimately prevent further spread around the world. Leveraging GHC’s global presence, CDC shared these new methods with partners around the world.
Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Solutions Initiative	Through the AMR Solutions Initiative at NCEZID, CDC invests in infrastructure to detect, respond, contain, and prevent antimicrobial-resistant infections to protect US citizens and people globally from this growing threat. While this initiative has a strong domestic focus, it also supports global efforts by contributing to national action plans, improving international collaboration on AMR, implementing programs in health care settings to prevent further spread, and growing CDC’s Global AMR Laboratory and Response Network.	The Global AMR Monitor—developed with the support of GHC’s institutional knowledge—is a new resource that will leverage the Gallup World Poll to gather nationally representative data on AMR knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors from more than 140 countries. Successful implementation of domestic and global programs requires high-quality data and knowledge regarding AMR and the development of new and innovative approaches for transforming this information into policies and actions to combat AMR.
The Division of High-Consequence Pathogens and Pathology (DHCPP)	DHCPP—under NCEZID—prepares and protects the public from global health security threats associated with high-consequence pathogens by quickly detecting and diagnosing infectious diseases, investigating outbreaks, building laboratory and epidemiological capacity, developing diagnostic tests and treatments, and more.	DHCPP worked with GHC’s in-country contacts and experts to conduct rapid and effective responses to anthrax outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo by providing training materials, sharing technical resources, and sending a laboratory expert to Uganda to support response efforts and trainings.
The Tuberculosis Trials Consortium (TBTC)	TBTC—operated by the Division of Tuberculosis Elimination under the National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention—is a collaboration of researchers from CDC and other domestic and international partners that conducts research on the diagnosis, clinical management, and prevention of TB infection and disease relevant to improving TB programming.	TBTC has relied on GHC activities and international presence to support its clinical trials, which have enrolled more than 14,000 patients and volunteers around the world over the past 20 years, supporting the development and rollout of new lifesaving TB tools and improvement of global TB care guidelines. Working closely with global partners, TBTC studies have enabled TB programs to cut the duration of TB prevention and treatment regimens in half.

What we stand to lose

Global health threats are national security threats. Scientific capacities and breakthroughs from across the CDC are strategically integrated to improve outbreak responses, helping to minimize health impacts for Americans and save lives worldwide.

Without a strong coordinating mechanism, efforts to fight deadly diseases would be fragmented—slowing outbreak response, accelerating the spread of infections, straining US resources, and making Americans more vulnerable. Critical collaboration among CDC country offices, divisions, and researchers would be fragmented, placing global and domestic health security at serious risk as health systems around the world are stretched to their limit. Years of hard-won progress against persistent global health threats like HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, and neglected tropical diseases could be lost with the future of CDC's global health work now in jeopardy. Already, we are seeing CDC's global malaria work at risk as the Division of Parasitic Diseases and Malaria struggles to maintain its international presence after a massive budget cut following the dissolution of an interagency agreement with the US Agency for International Development. This work could be restored through a new agreement with the US Department of State.

Investing in CDC's global health capacity and coordination has proved to be a valuable investment in US national security, the protection of global populations, and long-term economic resilience. For example, global immunization and disease surveillance programs are among the most effective—and cost-effective—interventions out there. On average, every \$1 invested in immunization produces more than \$50 in savings in health care costs, lost wages, and productivity due to illness. Investments in these vital programs stop diseases from spreading to the United States for far less than it would cost to respond to outbreaks in our communities.

By coordinating across CDC divisions and aligning global efforts, GHTC ensures maximum impact, eliminates redundancy, and strengthens our frontline defense against enduring and emerging public health threats. This coordinating mechanism for global health work serves as a vital, unifying force in the global health landscape—leading efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks before they become widespread crises. Its integrated, coordinated approach cannot be replicated by siloed programs operating in isolation. The innovations, research, diagnostics, and global partnerships that this collaborative institution has fostered build on one another over time, adapting to address evolving health threats across diverse regions and timeframes. Sustaining CDC's vital global health capacities by maintaining a coordinating structure is critical to maintaining our national and global health security.

