

Federal COVID-19 Testing Report: Data Insights from Six Federal Health Care Programs

This report examines COVID-19 testing efforts for six federal health care programs during the first seven months following the declaration of a public health emergency in the United States. Published by the PRAC Health Care Subgroup, the report takes a detailed look at testing data in each of the programs that, when combined, provide benefits or care for about 64 million individuals. **We hope this report will help policymakers as they continue to develop and refine their testing efforts related to testing accessibility and availability for at-risk populations, cost effectiveness, and sufficiency of data available to inform testing efforts.**

What is the PRAC Health Care Subgroup?

The PRAC Health Care Subgroup is comprised of Offices of Inspector General (OIGs) that oversee federal agencies providing or reimbursing health care services. These OIGs work together and share data to provide coordinated oversight across agencies and programs.

COVID-19 testing in six federal health care programs

From February through August 2020, six federal health care programs paid for or administered

10.7 million

COVID-19 tests, which constituted

12.7% of all tests

performed in the United States during that time.

Source: PRAC analysis of COVID-19 testing data from six federal health care programs, February-August 2020.

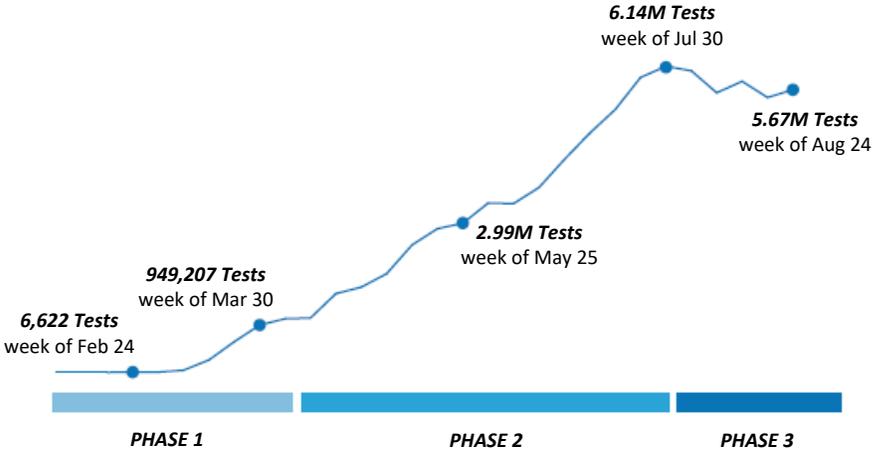
The subgroup asked the following questions of all six agencies:

1. How many COVID-19 tests were administered, and when?
2. Who was tested?
3. What types of tests were administered?
4. How much did each health care program pay for tests?
5. In what health care settings did people access testing?
6. How long did it take to return test results?

Insights

- Federal reimbursement for COVID-19 viral tests varied across the programs.
- Trends in COVID-19 testing largely followed the same pattern as national testing trends from February through August 2020.
- The majority of COVID-19 tests programs administered or paid for were viral tests, which detect current SARS-CoV-2 infections and identify those who could transmit the virus.
- Readily available information on COVID-19 test turnaround time was only available from the three programs that administered tests; two of the three reported that test processing times decreased over time.

Exhibit 3. Tests administered in the United States from February through August 2020, by week.



February-March 2020. Testing in the six federal health care programs and nationally was relatively low during the first months of the pandemic.

April-early June 2020. COVID-19 testing of federal beneficiaries in the six federal health care programs increased starting in mid-April as the virus began to spread in the United States.

Mid-July-August 2020. After the peak in July 2020, all but one of the six federal health care programs saw a plateau or decline in the number of COVID-19 tests administered to federal beneficiaries.

- With respect to gender, age, and race or ethnicity, testing of federal beneficiaries was generally proportional to the demographic characteristics of the population that two programs served; the other four programs had varying levels of demographic information available.

Federal health care programs covered in this report and the populations that they serve.

	Health care programs that process claims and pay COVID-19 testing			Health care programs that provide COVID-19 testing at facilities they manage or operate		
	HHS	OPM	DOL	VA	DOD	DOJ
<i>Federal Health Care Program</i>	Medicare Part B	Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP)	Office of Workers' Compensation Program	Veterans Health Administration	Medical Treatment Facilities	Bureau of Prisons
<i>Population Served*</i>	38.9 million adults age 65 years and older, as well as those with end-stage renal disease and people with qualifying disability	6.2 million federal employees, retirees, and eligible family members enrolled in two of the largest FEHBP carriers	More than 223,000 federal employees who filed for workers' compensation; current or former Department of Energy workers and contractors; and former coal miners and their surviving dependents	9 million enrolled veterans, employees, and other nonveterans, who meet specific criteria	9.6 million military personnel and their families	More than 218,000 federal inmates assigned to federal prisons operated by the Bureau of Prisons; contract prisons; and residential reentry centers (also know as halfway houses)
<i>Number of people who received at least one COVID-19 test</i>	5,090,175	473,440	1,098	553,687	319,674	66,587

* For detailed description of the population that each program serves, see the section for each agency.
 Source: PRAC analysis of COVID-19 testing data from six federal health programs, February-August 2020.