

CDC director Walensky announces sweeping review of agency

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In an effort to modernize an agency that has come under fire for its handling of the pandemic, the director of the U.S. Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention said Monday that the agency would undergo a monthlong review of its inner workings.

In an email sent to agency employees, Dr. Rochelle Walensky said she has hired a senior federal [health](#) official outside of the Atlanta-based agency to conduct the review to "kick off an evaluation of CDC's structure, systems and processes," the *Washington Post* reported.

"Over the past year, I have heard from many of you that you would like to see CDC build on its rich history and modernize for the world around us," she wrote in the email. "I am grateful for your efforts to lean into the hard work of transforming CDC for the better. I look forward to our collective efforts to position CDC, and the public health community, for greatest success in the future."

The review, which will start April 11, will be led by Jim Macrae, associate administrator for [primary health care](#) at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the *Post* reported. HRSA and CDC are part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Walensky said the revamp would focus on beefing up the nation's public health workforce, data modernization, laboratory capacity, health equity and rapid response to disease outbreaks. She also asked three senior CDC leaders to gather feedback on the agency, including suggestions for change.

"At the conclusion of this collective effort, we will develop new systems and processes to deliver our science and program to the American people, along with a plan for how [the] CDC should be structured to facilitate the public health work we do," she wrote, the *Post* reported.

Since the pandemic began, the venerable agency has been criticized heavily for its response, from initial delays developing a [coronavirus test](#),

to the severe eligibility limits to get the test, to missteps often blamed on the Trump administration. But even under Biden, the agency's guidance on [masking](#), isolation/quarantine and [booster doses](#) has been seen as confusing at best. A consistent criticism has been the agency's failure to be agile, especially with analysis and release of real-time data.

Walensky seemed to acknowledge those criticisms in brief public remarks about the reasons for the reorganization, the *Post* reported.

"Never in its 75-year history has [the] CDC had to make decisions so quickly, based on often limited, real-time and evolving science," she said in the statement. "... As we've challenged our state and local partners, we know that now is the time for CDC to integrate the lessons learned into a strategy for the future."

Some experts faulted the Biden administration for failing to provide Walensky with the support she needed to modernize the CDC before now.

"I think there needs to be a detailed accounting of why things failed so epically ... and that should have happened during the transition," Peter Hotez, dean for the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, told the *Post*.

Walensky has "done as good a job as pretty much anybody could have," Hotez added, noting she was saddled with inadequate infrastructure, and no information about what was broken within the agency.

More information: Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on the [CDC's history](#).

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