

US Health Staff Urge Kennedy to Strengthen Protections After CDC Shooting

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Over 750 employees of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including nearly 400 current staff and former leaders of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), have signed a letter urging Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to implement stronger safety measures for federal health workers. The letter, released on August 20, 2025, follows a fatal shooting at CDC facilities in Atlanta earlier this

month that raised concerns over employee security and the safety of public health officials.

The incident occurred on August 8, when a gunman fired nearly 200 rounds at six CDC buildings. Police officer David Rose was killed while attempting to stop the attacker. The gunman later died by suicide, and authorities discovered writings in his home expressing anger over the COVID-19 vaccine. The attack has prompted widespread concern among CDC staff and federal health employees about workplace safety and the threat posed by violent extremists targeting public health institutions.

Signatories of the letter have called for immediate action to protect employees and restore confidence in the agency's security procedures. Among their demands, they request the strengthening of emergency alerts and procedures by September 2, the removal of online "DEI watchlists" that track CDC staff and their personal information, and public statements from HHS affirming the CDC's commitment to evidence-based science and disavowing misinformation about vaccines. Staff members emphasized that clear, enforceable policies are necessary to prevent similar incidents and safeguard employees across the agency.

The letter also criticizes actions taken by Kennedy since his appointment. Staff contend that the dismissal of all 17 members of the CDC's vaccine advisory panel and the promotion of vaccine skepticism have undermined public health efforts and weakened the credibility of the CDC. They argue that leadership decisions should prioritize the safety of employees and the integrity of scientific guidance, particularly in light of rising threats against public health officials.

In addition to Kennedy, the appeal was sent to Congress and the White House, emphasizing the need for immediate steps to restore trust in the public health system. Officials and staff alike note that protecting federal health workers is essential not only for their personal safety but also for the nation's ability to respond to health crises effectively. The HHS has stated that the safety and well-being of CDC employees remain a top priority, while staff members maintain that stronger, enforceable protections are required.

The shooting at CDC facilities has intensified scrutiny of workplace security and raised awareness of the risks faced by public health personnel. Federal employees working in critical health roles confront unique challenges, including targeted threats from individuals opposed to vaccination programs and other public health measures. Staff members stress that without adequate protections, both employees and public health missions are placed at risk.

The collective appeal by HHS staff reflects a growing call for proactive safety measures, accountability in leadership, and transparent policies to prevent harm. As federal health employees await action, the broader public and government observers are closely monitoring how the administration will respond to the recommendations, which could have lasting implications for the safety and effectiveness of the nation's public health agencies.