



## **Two Years After Pentagon Bioterrorism Preparedness Report, Recent Study Finds Nation Still Only Marginally Better Prepared for Bioterrorism Attack Response**

Media contacts: Laura Segal (202) 223-9870 x 278 or lsegal@tfah.org or Michael Earls (202) 223-9870 x 273 or mearls@tfah.org

**WASHINGTON, March 29, 2004** — The new release by the Pentagon of parts of the two-year old analysis, “Lessons from the Anthrax Attacks: Implications for U.S. Bioterrorism Preparedness,” renews questions about the status of the nation’s preparedness to detect and respond to threats of biological, chemical, and radiological terrorism.

Nearly two-years after that study’s conclusion, a December 2003 report from Trust for America’s Health demonstrated that despite a \$2 billion investment, federal bioterrorism preparedness funding has made states only “modestly better prepared” to respond to health emergencies.

“This further reinforces that we are a day late and a dollar short in our bioterrorism preparedness response efforts,” said Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of TFAH. “During the two-year lag time in the partial-release of this study, there have been some important steps toward improved preparedness, however, the weaknesses defined in this report cannot be fixed overnight or with the current levels of funding being allocated to our nation’s public health system.”

The President’s proposed FY 2005 budget contains a \$105 million dollar decrease in federal funding for state and local bioterrorism preparedness and an almost three percent cut to the overall budget for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

TFAH’s December 2003 report, “Ready or Not? Protecting the Public’s Health in the Age of Bioterrorism,” examined 10 key indicators in the general categories of funding, public health infrastructure, and “double duty” indicators that reflected the status of states’ traditional public health programs. The findings showed that while progress had been made in most states to improve communications, planning, and some elements of the public health infrastructure; funding cuts at the state level, workforce shortages, and poor interagency collaboration led to most states earning positive marks for less than half of the indicators tested.

To ensure that preparedness measures are in place to respond to the full spectrum of health threats, Trust for America’s Health recommends a new “all hazards” approach to public health, which would ensure that federal, state, and local health agencies are battle-ready for all hazards, not just bioterrorism or the disease currently garnering headlines.

This approach would focus on strengthening the fundamentals of our public health defenses, including laboratory capabilities, a trained public health workforce, and communications and response procedures.

TFAH also recommends that the White House, in consultation with Congress, convene a national summit on the future of public health to develop a cohesive and proactive approach to public health protection.

TFAH's reports and related public health materials are available at:  
[www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org)

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*Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.*