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New Report

RFK Jr. Has Led a Crusade Against Vaccines, Disproportionately Targeting and Harming People of Color

Quick Facts

- **Funding and Policy Shifts Have Led to 750,000 Excess Deaths Worldwide.** These [staggering numbers](#) reflect the interrupted immunization campaigns, delayed HIV and tuberculosis treatment initiation, weakened malaria control programs, and disruptions to maternal and child health services, all coming under the leadership of Donald Trump and RFK Jr. Around 500,000 of these excess deaths are children.
- **Targeted Black Professionals Working on Immunization and Health Campaigns at HHS.** When RFK Jr. suddenly [fired](#) 10,000 HHS employees, he was not doing so in a colorblind manner. While Black people make up nearly 14 percent of the U.S. population, around [20 percent](#) of people who work at HHS are Black, and they were [disproportionately at risk](#) of losing their jobs last year.
- **Supported Different Vaccine Schedules for Different “Races.”** RFK Jr.’s [history](#) of undermining trust in vaccines includes statements claiming Black people should be given fewer vaccinations than white people, highlighting his eugenics-inspired mythology of race as a biological reality, and promoting a policy which would decrease [already low](#) Black vaccination rates. When [confronted](#) about these statements at his own confirmation hearing he defended them.
- **The Number of Children Getting Properly Vaccinated Has Declined.** Asian American children have seen the sharpest decline recently, with a [7 percent](#) drop. Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native children also still [fall below](#) the MMR vaccination goal of 90 percent by 2030. Thanks to RFK Jr.’s ACIP panel recommendations, fewer [vaccines](#), like those for MMR and measles, may be available for low income children, who disproportionately are people of color, in the future.
- **Millions Have Been Stripped Away from AI/AN Communities Immunization and Health Programs.** RFK Jr.’s massive cuts to HHS programs have disproportionately targeted AI/AN communities, with over [\\$6 million](#) in grants slashed in just the last year. These grants were filling in the [gaps](#) for [vaccination](#) and other health programs as AI/AN are less likely to have access to hospital services or even a local doctor.

Digging Deeper

Allowing the Largest Measles Outbreak in Decades to Spread. So far in 2026 there have already been [14 outbreaks](#) of measles reported, with 28 states having cases in them and over 1,100 people affected. Wherever RFK Jr. goes measles seems to follow, as this is the [second time](#) he and his anti-

vaccine policies have directly led to a massive outbreak. Ohio alone has seen [two outbreaks](#) in just two months. Measles is predominately affecting [unvaccinated individuals](#) and communities who have not achieved herd immunity, like around [half of Texas towns](#). This means that historically marginalized populations are incredibly vulnerable as the measles rips through families and communities though; a recent Minnesota study found that only [31 percent](#) of Somali-Minnesotan children and [64 percent](#) of Ethiopian-Minnesotan children were vaccinated against measles by the age of two. Minnesota has now seen a [rapid increase](#) in measles cases over the last month.

Funding Dangerous and Debunked Science to Further His Anti-Vaccine Agenda. RFK Jr. has turned vaccine research into a political tool to further his own campaign against immunizations. He has recently awarded millions in grants to [discredited scientists](#) and cranks. Most recently RFK Jr. has worked to put the efficacy of the Hepatitis B vaccine in doubt, a vaccine with a 50 year history which will have saved [40 million](#) lives by 2030. While the [proposed methodology](#) of this newest study is “nowhere near where a study of this type should be both scientifically and ethically,” the effects of such a campaign against Hepatitis B immunization will have an outsized effect on communities of color. Studies show the fewer Black people often [meet the criteria](#) for effective Hepatitis B treatment and that Hispanic people are [less likely](#) to receive any treatment for their Chronic Hepatitis B.

Censoring Doctors With the Indian Health Service. American Indians/Alaska Natives have been found [time](#) and time again to have higher socioeconomic and health risk factors for transmissible diseases, making vaccination efforts incredibly important. This vaccination gap has widened with AI/AN children being [16 percent](#) less likely to be fully vaccinated by age two when compared to all U.S. children born that year, with adults getting the flu vaccine 23 percent less often than U.S. adults overall. Amidst this gap, RFK’s HHS has begun [flagging](#) both internally and externally all mentions of vaccines and immunizations, calling them “buzzwords” and instead in promotional material highlighting personal choice over public safety. This has led to many doctors within the Indian Health Service feeling censored and their immunization campaigns so undermined that multiple people have left the agency entirely.

Filling the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices with Anti-Vax Sycophants. RFK Jr. booted the entire ACIP panel and replaced them with people who have a [history](#) of anti-vaccine sentiment and statements. Over the last year this has led to a [chaotic mess](#) of vaccine rescheduling for children, the promotion of debunked studies, and the further eroding away of public trust in government immunization programs.

Purging “Equity” From Science. RFK Jr. has been particularly ruthless in targeting research or health programs that address health disparities. An NIH analysis by former institute director Jeremy Berg

[found](#) more than 700 multiyear grants were forced to change titles from 2024 to 2025, with nearly 100 removing the word “equity,” dozens deleting “disparities,” and many stripping out references to specific racial groups and gender minorities. HHS leadership froze or “reconsidered” scores of diversity and equity-related grants, and agency leadership has [signaled](#) that even those restored under court order are unlikely to be renewed. Head Start centers were told to [avoid](#) words like “disability,” “woman,” and “tribal” or risk losing HHS funding, and NIH was forced to [backtrack](#) from plans to eliminate the Women’s Health Initiative, a landmark study of women’s health. Senior NIH leaders who [resigned](#) in protest said this combination of cuts and censorship has made topics like health inequities, structural racism, and gender-affirming care dangerous to study, costing the agency its scientific integrity.