



Oversight of the Sexually Transmitted Disease/Human Immunodeficiency Virus (STD/HIV) Prevention Services Program

Texas Department of State Health Services

Results in Brief

Why OIG Conducted This Audit

The Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General Audit and Inspections Division (OIG Audit) conducted an audit of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), which managed oversight activities for the Sexually Transmitted Disease/Human Immunodeficiency Virus (STD/HIV) Prevention Services Program.

DSHS acts as a pass-through entity between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the contracted local health departments for sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention and control programs. Contracts for all 17 contracted local health departments were valued at \$35.2 million for the period from January 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022.

Summary of Review

The audit objective was to determine whether DSHS, through certain contracting and program management functions, effectively managed the STD/HIV Prevention Services Program.

The audit scope covered the period from January 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022. The audit included a review of the DSHS's internal controls as well as testing of controls that were significant within the context of the audit objective.

Conclusion

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) managed oversight activities for the Sexually Transmitted Disease/Human Immunodeficiency Virus (STD/HIV) Prevention Services Program. DSHS had processes in place to review contracts and reimbursements to manage the program. However, management functions did not always effectively ensure (a) program performance measures were met, (b) financial expenditures were supported, (c) security and confidentiality requirements were communicated, and (d) contract development quality assurance checklists were completed timely.

Key Results

DSHS performed contracting and program management activities for the STD/HIV Prevention Services Program, such as verifying that contracts were reviewed and approved before execution and program reimbursements did not exceed total budgets. However, DSHS did not ensure contracted local health departments met program performance measures designed to gauge the effectiveness of the STD/HIV Prevention Services Program. Specifically, DSHS instructed all 17 local health departments contracted to participate in the program to stop reporting variance explanations on program performance measures, including during the audit scope period from January 2021 through August 2022.

DSHS did not always verify that expenditures were allowable because vouchers submitted were not detailed. Not all expenses incurred by the contracted local health departments and reimbursed by DSHS were allowable. Specifically, 12 of 28 vouchers tested, totaling \$1,285,920.94, were submitted with insufficient detail for DSHS to determine allowability.

Background

The DSHS STD/HIV Prevention Services Program is designed to control and prevent the spread of STDs, including human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and viral hepatitis, through services that include education, prevention counseling, medical consultations, diagnosis, treatment, and partner notification. DSHS provides these services through contracts with 17 local health departments and must report outcomes to the CDC.

DSHS is responsible for overseeing the STD/HIV Prevention Services Program by (a) communicating program requirements to contracted local health departments; (b) monitoring program performance outcomes; (c) developing and implementing adequate policies and procedures to oversee the program's budget, expenses, data security, and confidentiality; and (d) following applicable state and federal policies, laws, and regulations.

Management Response

DSHS partially agreed with the audit recommendations and indicated corrective actions would be implemented by February 2024.

For more information, contact:
OIGAuditReports@hhs.texas.gov

Additionally, while DSHS required the contracted local health departments to appropriately restrict access to confidential data, it did not effectively communicate information security and confidentiality control requirements to contracted local health departments participating in the STD/HIV Prevention Services Program.

DSHS completed its quality assurance process for all 29 STD/HIV Prevention Services Program contract documents reviewed as part of this audit; however, it did not complete the review process for 26 of the 29 contract documents timely. On average, DSHS finalized the process 305 days after the contract or amendment was signed.

Recommendations

DSHS should:

- Enforce contract requirements and direct contracted local health departments to report program performance measures.
- Use information obtained from program performance measure reports to enforce compliance with program requirements and identify opportunities for program improvement.
- Establish processes and controls to limit expenditures to allowable program activities for the STD/HIV Prevention Services Program.
- Develop a process to verify that submitted voucher support forms describe the goods and services provided in sufficient detail to meet state and federal contracting requirements.
- Develop processes to include and update all relevant security requirements in DSHS guidance manuals, instructions, and contract language, as applicable.
- Develop a process to (a) complete the contract development quality assurance process timely and (b) align its STD/HIV Prevention Services Program contracts and amendments with internal DSHS requirements as well as requirements from the Code of Federal Regulations and *Texas Grant Management Standards*.