



September 28, 2021

## 2021 HHS Climate Crisis Adaption and Resilience Policy Statement

When President Biden signed Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, he stressed the magnitude of the health impacts of the climate crisis, saying, "Even as our nation emerges from profound public health and economic crises borne of a pandemic, we face a climate crisis that threatens our people and communities, public health and economy, and, starkly, our ability to live on planet Earth." The climate crisis increases frequency and severity of extreme weather events; threatens food, water, and global health security; disrupts natural ecosystems, resulting in the spread of disease; exacerbates mental health issues; and, has numerous other impacts on human health, including exacerbation of health inequities, making the climate crisis one of the greatest threats to humanity in recorded history.

**Policy:** It is the mission of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to protect the health and well-being of all Americans, and therefore HHS policy shall be to build the evidence base for climate change mitigation and adaptation actions that promote health, implement equitable interventions to reduce the health impacts of worsening climate; promote climate actions across all sectors that reduce existing environmental health risks and health disparities; and enhance the sustainability and resilience of the health sector in the United States.

**Leading Through Mission:** The climate crisis has already affected all aspects of HHS's mission and operations. Accordingly, HHS will develop an agency-wide initiative to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation into our programs and management functions. As a global leader in public health and the provision of health services, HHS will communicate to a wide variety of partners about the health threats of climate change and actions that can be taken to improve health. In addition, HHS will conduct research and health surveillance to support the development of evidence-based interventions to protect health in the face of climate change.

**Leading by Example:** HHS will help to lead the nation's effort to combat the climate crisis by example,

leveraging our operations to support robust climate action. To accomplish this goal, HHS will work to reduce our own carbon emissions and ensure that our procurements and grants support sustainable and climate resilient products, services, and supply chains. Additionally, HHS will ensure that our own management and staff are familiar with the health implications of climate change and that the Department is prepared to sustain operations in the face of extreme weather events and other climate change-related threats.

**Climate Action for All:** Although the climate crisis affects everyone, those most susceptible include communities of color, older adults, children, pregnant persons, people with lower incomes, people with pre-existing physical and behavioral health conditions, and other disproportionately affected populations. Existing health disparities are likely to be exacerbated by the climate crisis. HHS is committed to protecting the health of all Americans by integrating environmental justice and equity into our work.

HHS is proud that the United States is becoming re-established as a global leader on climate action, and we look forward to helping make the world safer, healthier, and more productive for the present and future generations.

/s/

**Xavier Becerra**

Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services