



## BRIEFLY...

### COVID-19: ETA SHOULD CONTINUE TO CLOSELY MONITOR IMPACT ON JOB CORPS PROGRAM

July 28, 2020

#### WHY OIG CONDUCTED THE AUDIT

On January 31, 2020, the Secretary for Health and Human Services declared a nationwide public health emergency in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. As of June 28, 2020, there were over 2 million confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States, and social distancing mandates have caused mass disruption to the economy and peoples' lives in every state.

As part of Phase 1 of the OIG's Pandemic Oversight Response Plan, this report presents the results of our audit of the Employment and Training Administration's initial response to challenges to the Job Corps program posed by the pandemic.

#### WHAT OIG DID

We conducted a performance audit to answer the following question:

What actions has Job Corps taken in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic?

To answer this question, we interviewed ETA and Job Corps officials, and reviewed select guidance issued by federal, state, local governments; and policies and guidance Job Corps issued on COVID-19.

#### READ THE FULL REPORT

<https://www.oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2020/19-20-007-03-370.pdf>

#### WHAT OIG FOUND

Job Corps temporarily suspended operations on its campuses on March 16, 2020 and transported nearly 30,000 students to their homes or found them housing. Fifty-five centers remained open to house and feed 445 students who had nowhere to go. Between March 16 and May 31, 2020, 4 of these students tested positive for COVID-19. Thirty-five staff tested positive while they were actively working.

Job Corps transitioned all centers to remote learning on May 11, 2020 in order to continue educating and training students. However, not all students had a laptop, tablet, or even internet access to participate in remote learning. Job Corps said it is working to ensure each student has the necessary tools needed for remote learning by August 2020. Remote learning creates additional challenges for Job Corps students as most are high school dropouts and have deficiencies in basic skills. Without the structured environment Job Corps provides, some students may not be able to learn remotely and may leave the program. Remote learning will be especially challenging as some technical training skills, such as automotive and machine repair, carpentry, and advanced cement masonry, may be difficult to learn when limited to only virtual instruction.

In preparation for when all Job Corps centers reopen, Job Corps recognizes students may surpass the allotted amount of time they may remain in the program. Job Corps said it will grant extensions to address this. In April 2020, Job Corps also started requiring its career transition and outreach and admissions services providers work remotely.

#### WHAT OIG RECOMMENDED

We made recommendations focused on protecting the health of students and staff currently at centers, ensuring both centers and remote students have the necessary resources to engage in a virtual learning environment, and ensuring centers have the proper controls in place to adhere to national safety guidance prior to reopening their campuses.

ETA generally agreed with our recommendations.