

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-124](#), a report to congressional addressees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Almost 70,000 people died from drug overdoses in 2018, according to the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. The 2018 SUPPORT Act reauthorized ONDCP and imposed new requirements. GAO noted in its March 2019 High Risk report that the federal effort to prevent drug misuse is an emerging issue requiring close attention.

Pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 1708a(b), GAO has periodically assessed ONDCP's programs and operations. This report assesses the extent to which ONDCP (1) met selected statutory requirements related to the National Drug Control Strategy in 2017, 2018, and 2019, and (2) has planned or implemented actions to meet selected new requirements in the SUPPORT Act. GAO assessed the 2019 Strategy and companion documents against four key statutory requirements that were consistent with or similar to ONDCP's ongoing responsibilities under the SUPPORT Act. GAO also assessed ONDCP's progress in addressing seven new SUPPORT Act requirements, and interviewed ONDCP officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 4 recommendations to ONDCP to develop, document, and implement key planning elements to meet certain requirements in the SUPPORT Act. ONDCP agreed to implement 2 recommendations related to the Strategy, but disagreed with 2 related to the Drug Control Data Dashboard, noting that recent updates satisfy the law. GAO maintains that they do not fully do so, and that implementing key planning elements would help address the law, as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-20-124](#). For more information, contact Triana McNeil at (202) 512-8777 or [McNeilT@gao.gov](mailto:McNeilT@gao.gov) or Mary Denigan-Macauley at (202) 512-7114 or [DeniganMacauleyM@gao.gov](mailto:DeniganMacauleyM@gao.gov).

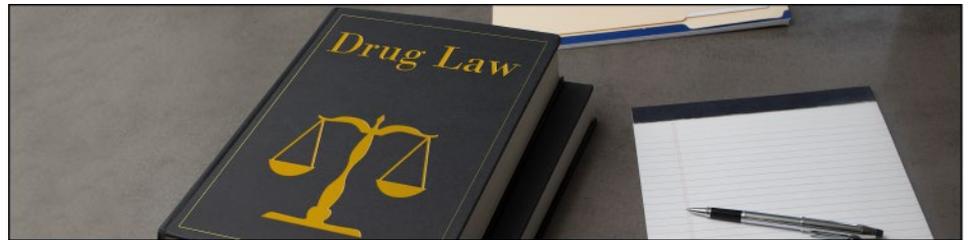
December 2019

## DRUG CONTROL

# The Office of National Drug Control Policy Should Develop Key Planning Elements to Meet Statutory Requirements

## What GAO Found

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the development and implementation of U.S. drug control policy across the federal government. However, ONDCP did not issue a National Drug Control Strategy for either 2017 or 2018, as required by statute. ONDCP was also required to assess and certify federal agencies' drug control budgets to determine if they were adequate to meet Strategy goals and objectives. Without a Strategy in 2017 and 2018, ONDCP could not complete this process according to statutory requirements. ONDCP issued a 2019 Strategy and companion documents that addressed some but not all of the selected statutory requirements GAO reviewed. For example, the Strategy and companion documents did not include the required 5-year projection for budget priorities.



Source: GAO photo illustration. | GAO-20-124

The October 2018 Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act (SUPPORT Act) retained some requirements and introduced new ones for ONDCP. ONDCP met some SUPPORT Act requirements GAO reviewed. For example, ONDCP filled all five coordinator positions described in the SUPPORT Act. However, its approach to meeting other requirements does not incorporate key planning elements. For example, the SUPPORT Act requires that future iterations of the Strategy include a description of how each goal will be achieved, performance evaluation plans, and a plan for expanding treatment of substance use disorders. ONDCP could not provide in writing or otherwise describe its planned steps, interim milestones, resource investments, or overall timeframes—all key planning elements—that would provide assurance it can meet these requirements by the deadline for the next Strategy—February 2020. The SUPPORT Act also required ONDCP to publish an online searchable Data Dashboard of drug control data, with information including quantities of drugs and frequency of their use. While ONDCP published (and later updated) a public version of this resource on its website, as of December 2019, it was not complete (e.g., lacked required data on the unmet need for substance use disorder treatment). Further, ONDCP officials had no information on next steps for fully meeting the requirements. Developing, documenting, and implementing key planning elements to meet these requirements—including resource investments, time frames, and any processes, policies, roles, and responsibilities—would be consistent with key principles for achieving an entity's objective and standards for project management. Importantly, doing so would help ONDCP structure its planning efforts and comply with the law.