

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105508](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2021, a record 107,000 Americans died from drug overdoses, according to CDC's provisional data. In 2020, GAO designated drug misuse a high-risk issue and subsequently added it to the [2021 High-Risk Series](#) update. The federal drug control budget for fiscal year 2022 was \$39 billion. The federal government has enlisted more than a dozen federal agencies to address drug misuse and its effects. ONDCP plays a critical role in overseeing and coordinating the development and implementation of U.S. drug control policy and development of the National Drug Control Strategy and Budget.

The Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act (SUPPORT Act) includes a provision for GAO to review ONDCP's programs and operations. This report (1) assesses the extent to which ONDCP followed its documented process for developing its 2022 National Drug Control Strategy, (2) assesses the extent to which the 2022 Strategy adhered to selected statutory requirements, and (3) describes ONDCP's mechanisms for overseeing the agency's key programs.

GAO obtained and analyzed documentation against ONDCP's Strategy development plan, and assessed the Strategy documents against selected statutory requirements. To describe ONDCP's activities for overseeing the agency's key programs, GAO analyzed program evaluations, annual reports, and interagency agreements. GAO also interviewed ONDCP staff.

View [GAO-23-105508](#). For more information, contact Triana McNeil at (202) 512-8777 or mcnelt@gao.gov.

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DRUG CONTROL

Office of National Drug Control Policy Met Some Strategy Requirements but Needs a Performance Evaluation Plan

What GAO Found

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) created a plan for developing the National Drug Control Strategy, and generally followed its documented process to develop the 2022 Strategy. From August 2021 to June 2022, ONDCP issued the Strategy and accompanying documents to address certain statutory requirements.

The 2022 Strategy and accompanying documents vary in their level of compliance with selected statutory requirements. The Strategy fully met some requirements, including those related to comprehensive, long-range, quantifiable goals, and targets to accomplish those goals. The Strategy partially met other selected requirements, including those related to identifying resources for the treatment of substance use disorders. The Strategy does not address some statutory requirements, including some related to future planning. For example, the Strategy is to contain a systematic plan for increasing data collection, including to enable real time surveillance of drug control threats. However, as of December 2022, ONDCP has not created such a plan. GAO recommended in 2019 that ONDCP routinely implement an approach to meet the requirements for the 2020 Strategy and future iterations. Doing so will better position ONDCP to ensure that future strategies completely address all of the statutory requirements.

Depiction of Various Narcotics



Source: GAO. | [GAO-23-105508](#)

ONDCP has oversight mechanisms to assess the performance of its key programs that support the National Drug Control Program. Specifically, ONDCP has conducted audits and evaluations of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program, including assessing each region's performance on its goals. From fiscal years 2019-2021, ONDCP made recommendations to individual regions to improve performance data accuracy and strengthen financial internal controls, which ONDCP reported were implemented. ONDCP also annually assesses whether the Drug-Free Communities Support Program met its goals.

Specifically, ONDCP monitors the performance of the program's community coalitions through regular grantee reporting and weekly meetings with officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which manages the program. The program's 2020 and 2021 evaluations found that its coalitions met the goal of increasing the percentages of local youth who chose not to use substances. The National Anti-Drug Media Campaign's *Truth About Opioids* initiative ran from June 2018 to August 2019. ONDCP reported that contractors provided the required monthly progress reports and met performance targets. ONDCP did not identify any deficiencies in the program.