

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-96](#), a report to the Congress

Why GAO Did This Study

Most people who develop a substance use disorder begin using substances as adolescents. To reach adolescents, drug prevention programs are frequently provided in schools. Education, HHS, and ONDCP manage most federal programs that support school-based drug prevention activities.

This report (1) describes how Education, HHS, and ONDCP support drug prevention activities in schools, and monitor those efforts and (2) examines the extent to which these agencies identify how their prevention activities support the National Drug Control Strategy.

GAO reviewed agency documentation, the 2019 and 2020 National Drug Control Strategy documents which ONDCP identified as being most relevant to our review including the fiscal year 2019 drug control budget, ONDCP guidance, relevant federal laws, and GAO's prior work on attributes of successful performance measures that can help achieve agency goals. GAO also interviewed federal and state officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations, including that Education, HHS, and ONDCP clarify how grants that can include drug prevention education programs support related goals of the National Drug Control Strategy. HHS and ONCP agreed with the recommendation and Education partially concurred, saying it would explore collecting and reporting related performance data.

View [GAO-21-96](#). For more information, contact Jacqueline M. Nowicki at (617) 788-0580 or nowickij@gao.gov.

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DRUG MISUSE

Agencies Have Not Fully Identified How Grants That Can Support Drug Prevention Education Programs Contribute to National Goals

What GAO Found

The Department of Education (Education), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) manage six key federal grant programs that can support drug prevention activities in schools. The flexibility of these grants supports a variety of drug prevention education programs. The agencies generally monitor grantees' compliance with grant requirements through periodic reporting.



Source: GAO. | GAO-21-96

The aim of the National Drug Control Strategy (Strategy) is to reduce drug misuse, but HHS, and ONDCP have not fully defined how several key grant programs support the Strategy. ONDCP's guidance directs agencies to report, for each grant program, performance measures that relate to the Strategy's goals. However, some performance measures for several programs did not relate to drug prevention, did not link directly to the Strategy's prevention goals, or were not reported at all. For example:

- A \$372 million set-aside for HHS's Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant program must be used on drug prevention, but HHS did not link the program's performance measures to the Strategy's prevention education goal.
- ONDCP did not report on any performance measures in the Strategy or document how its \$100 million Drug-Free Communities Support program contributes to achieving specific goals in the Strategy.

GAO also found that the approximately \$10 million grants to states component of Education's School Climate Transformation Grant program could more fully provide performance information related to the Strategy's prevention education goal.

Fully understanding these programs' contributions to the goals of the National Drug Control Strategy could help Congress and the public better understand and assess how the nation's significant investments in drug prevention education programs help address the drug crisis.