OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

Office Could Better Identify Opportunities to Increase Program Coordination

What GAO Found

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and federal agencies have not made progress toward achieving most of the goals articulated in the 2010 National Drug Control Strategy (the Strategy), but are reported to be on track to implement most Strategy action items intended to support these goals. ONDCP established seven Strategy goals related to reducing illicit drug use and its consequences by 2015. As of March 2013, GAO’s analysis showed that of the five goals for which primary data on results are available, one shows progress and four show no progress. For example, no progress has been made on reducing drug use among 12- to 17-year-olds by 15 percent. This is primarily due to an increase in the rate of reported marijuana use, offset by decreases in the rates of reported use of other drugs. Nevertheless, ONDCP reported that 107 of the 112 action items in the Strategy are complete or on track. ONDCP officials stated that implementing these action items is necessary but may not be sufficient to achieve Strategy goals.

ONDCP primarily intends to address the extent of progress in achieving Strategy goals through its new Performance Reporting System (PRS)—a monitoring mechanism intended to provide specific, routine information on progress toward Strategy goals and help identify factors for performance gaps and options for improvement. ONDCP officials stated that they plan to report on PRS results for the first time in 2013. They also said that they plan to assess the system’s reliability and effectiveness. This could help increase accountability for improving results and identify ways to bridge the gap that currently exists between the lack of progress toward Strategy goals and the strong progress made on implementing Strategy actions.

Drug abuse prevention and treatment programs are fragmented across 15 federal agencies and provide some overlapping services, which could increase the risk of duplication. Specifically, GAO identified overlap in 59 of the 76 programs included in its review. These programs could provide or fund one or more drug abuse prevention or treatment service that at least one other program could also provide or fund, either to similar population groups or to reach similar program goals. Such fragmentation and overlap may result in inefficient use of resources among programs providing similar services.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that ONDCP assess the extent of overlap and the potential for duplication across federal programs engaged in drug abuse prevention and treatment activities and identify opportunities for increased coordination. ONDCP concurred and stated that it will work with agencies administering these programs to further enhance coordination.

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