ILLEGAL MARIJUANA

Opportunities Exist to Improve Oversight of State and Local Eradication Efforts

Why GAO Did This Study
Marijuana is generally illegal under federal law. Nonetheless, an increasing number of states have legalized medical or recreational marijuana under state law. However, in these states, some marijuana-related activity may still be illegal under state law. Since 1981, DEA’s DCE/SP has provided financial support to participating state and local agencies for their efforts to eradicate illegal marijuana.

GAO was asked to review DEA’s DCE/SP. This report examines (1) DCE/SP funding and expenditures in recent years, (2) how DEA ensures that participating agencies expend funds in accordance with program requirements, and (3) how DEA uses performance assessment to help manage DCE/SP. GAO analyzed DCE/SP guidance, and expenditure and performance information from 2015 through fiscal year 2017, and evaluated DEA’s oversight and performance management efforts against internal control standards. GAO also interviewed officials from DEA, the U.S. Forest Service, and participating agencies in six states, which GAO selected to include varying levels of DCE/SP funding and numbers of marijuana grow sites eradicated in recent years.

What GAO Recommends
GAO is making four recommendations, including that DEA develop a plan to ensure the collection of consistent documentation of expenditures, clarify its guidance for reporting program activities, document all of its program goals, and develop performance measures. DEA concurred with the recommendations.

View GAO-19-9. For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or goodwing@gao.gov.