

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-423](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

BOP is responsible for managing the care and custody of approximately 175,000 federal inmates—an estimated 20 percent of whom have been diagnosed with a substance use disorder. Through its drug education and treatment programs, BOP aims to help these inmates avoid substance use after reentering society—a time when they are at a high risk of drug overdose.

GAO was asked to review BOP's efforts to provide drug treatment to federal inmates. This report (1) describes BOP's drug education and treatment programs and funding for them from fiscal years 2015 through 2019, (2) examines BOP's plans for expanding the MAT program, and (3) examines BOP's plans for evaluating and managing these programs. GAO examined program documentation and data, interviewed BOP officials regarding the provision of drug treatment, and conducted site visits that included four BOP institutions and one privately managed institution selected, in part, for the range of drug treatment programs offered.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations to BOP, including to develop key planning elements for expanding its MAT program and to develop and implement a plan that agency leadership can use to manage its portfolio of drug treatment programs. The Department of Justice concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-20-423](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or goodwing@gao.gov.

May 2020

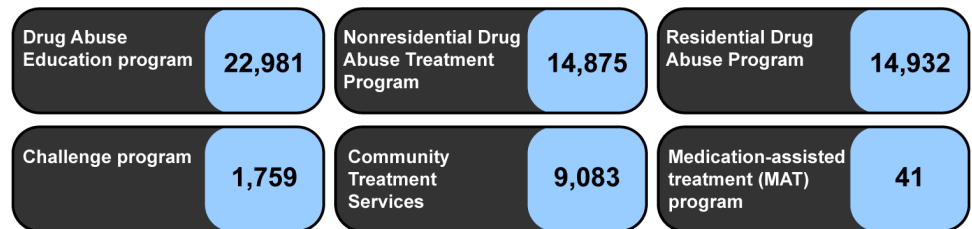
BUREAU OF PRISONS

Improved Planning Would Help BOP Evaluate and Manage Its Portfolio of Drug Education and Treatment Programs

What GAO Found

The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) provides a drug education program and five drug treatment programs to federal inmates. BOP's most intensive drug treatment program—the Residential Drug Abuse Program—requires inmates to reside in a treatment unit set apart from the general population. From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, BOP obligated about \$584 million for its programs. In fiscal year 2019, it implemented a new medication-assisted treatment (MAT) program for inmates with opioid use disorder. This program combines cognitive behavioral therapy with the use of medications—naltrexone, buprenorphine, and methadone.

Number of Inmates Who Participated in Each of the Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) Drug Education and Treatment Programs in Fiscal Year 2019



Source: GAO analysis of BOP information. | [GAO-20-423](#)

Notes: BOP information on participation in its drug education and treatment programs captures the total number of discrete inmates who participated in a given program at any point during fiscal year 2019. Inmates may have participated in more than one program. BOP implemented the MAT program in fiscal year 2019.

BOP is taking steps to expand its MAT program nationwide to ensure all eligible inmates have access to the program and estimates needing \$76.2 million across fiscal years 2020 and 2021 to do so. However, it lacks key planning elements to ensure its significant expansion efforts are timely and effective. For example, BOP lacks documentation on its methods for determining the number of additional agency personnel it reports needing to support MAT program expansion; how it plans to recruit and onboard these personnel; and time frames and target goals for key milestones, such as when the expansion will be completed. Developing these planning elements would better position BOP to identify and complete the tasks and objectives necessary to successfully implement its MAT program.

BOP's existing plan for evaluating its drug treatment programs has not been implemented and omits key programs, including MAT. Without an updated plan for evaluating all of its programs, the agency risks continuing or implementing programs that may not be effective. BOP also lacks a plan that agency leadership can use to manage its expanded portfolio of drug education and treatment programs, particularly given the substantial financial investment of the MAT program. Developing and implementing such a plan would help ensure BOP is effectively using available resources and making informed decisions in managing its portfolio of drug education and treatment programs.