



2011 National Drug Control Strategy

Executive Summary



In May of 2010, President Obama released the Administration's inaugural *National Drug Control Strategy*, a comprehensive approach to combat the public health and safety consequences posed by drug use. Now, a year later, the Administration is releasing its update building upon that initial *Strategy*. The *Strategy* establishes ambitious goals to reduce both drug use and drug-related consequences. This five-year plan aims to cut drug use among youth by 15 percent, drug-induced deaths and drug-related morbidity by 15 percent, and drugged driving by 10 percent. To achieve these goals, the *Strategy* focuses on seven core areas:

- Strengthening efforts to prevent drug use in our communities;
- Seeking early intervention opportunities in health care;
- Integrating treatment for substance use disorders into health care, and supporting recovery;
- Breaking the cycle of drug use, crime, delinquency, and incarceration;
- Disrupting domestic drug trafficking and production;
- Strengthening international partnerships; and
- Improving information systems to better analyze, assess, and locally address drug use and its consequences.

Drug use and its consequences require significant annual expenditures for criminal justice and health-care systems; they erode economic competitiveness, military readiness, educational outcomes, and workforce productivity. Americans with drug or alcohol use disorders spend more days in the hospital and require more expensive care than they would absent such disorders. Overall, the economic impact of illicit drug use on American society totaled more than \$193 billion in 2007, the last year for which data are available.

Recent data on prescription drug abuse offer cause for concern. The largest number of past-year new users initiated drug use with psycho-pharmaceuticals, more than any other drug, including marijuana. In the past ten years, drug-induced deaths—driven by prescription drugs—have more than doubled.

Also troubling is the fact that youth attitudes toward illicit drug use are softening. Young people are becoming less likely to perceive illicit drug use as risky or to disapprove of those who use drugs. Historical data show that when youth perception of risk diminishes, their use increases.

Consequences of Drug Use

Drug-induced deaths now outnumber gunshot deaths in America. In 17 states and the District of Columbia, drug-induced deaths now exceed motor vehicle crashes as the leading cause of injury death. Over ten percent of diagnosed HIV cases are transmitted via injection drug use, and drug use itself fosters risky behavior contributing to the spread of infectious diseases nationwide. Studies of children in foster care find that two-thirds to three-quarters of cases involve parental substance abuse.

Illicit drug use is also inextricably linked to crime, not only because of the costs of purchasing drugs, but because the pharmacological effects of many drugs lead to violent behavior. Survey data indicate that over half of state and Federal inmates used drugs during the month preceding the offense corresponding to their sentence, and nearly one-third of state prisoners and a quarter of Federal prisoners used drugs at the time of the offense. The 2010 Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Annual Report (ADAM II) corroborates this trend. The percentage of booked arrestees testing positive for at least one illicit drug ranges from 49 percent in Washington, D.C., to 87 percent in Chicago, regardless of the crime.

2011 Strategy Update

The 2011 *National Drug Control Strategy* is built upon the same foundation as the 2010 *Strategy*, and provides updates on accomplishments over the past year. Since its release, ONDCP has coordinated an unprecedented government-wide public health approach to reduce drug use and its consequences in the United States, while maintaining strong support for law enforcement. The Administration is working hard to expand early intervention programs in healthcare settings, aligning criminal justice policies and public health systems to divert non-violent drug offenders into treatment instead of jail, funding more scientific research on drug use, and expanding access to substance abuse treatment. The 2011 *Strategy* also strengthens our commitments to key international partners, working simultaneously on supply and demand reduction efforts with allies in the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Illicit drug use disproportionately affects certain segments of society. Therefore, the 2011 *Strategy* places additional focus on populations with unique challenges and needs in addressing their substance abuse issues: active duty military and Veterans; women and their families; college and university students; and those in the criminal justice system.

A 2008 Department of Defense (DOD) survey revealed that one in eight active duty military personnel reported current illicit drug use, including non-medical use of prescription drugs. Largely due to regular testing, the use of illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine is rare among active duty military. Those reporting prescription drug misuse (11.5%) is more than double that of the civilian population in the age group 18-64 (4.4%). Furthermore, upon retirement or discharge from the military, the injuries or trauma experienced during their service can lead to drug use and other negative behaviors.

Women continue to use illicit drugs at alarming numbers, yet both currently and historically, they receive treatment less frequently than men. Many treatment programs are designed for and used mostly by men. In addition, women must weigh competing family responsibilities and concerns against the need for substance abuse treatment. For example, many traditional treatment programs do not allow

parenting mothers to keep their children with them, causing many women to choose between maintaining custody of their children and getting the substance abuse treatment they need to become better, more responsible caregivers.

Substance abuse has a devastating impact on families. Involvement with the child welfare system can complicate a woman's decision to seek care. Parental substance abuse is the primary reason for removal in 33 percent of cases involving children under one, and a quarter of cases involving children ages 2 to 8. By admitting to a substance abuse problem, involvement with the criminal justice system and the loss of custody of children may occur. This must change; women should not feel torn between seeking treatment and caring for their families. There are many model family-based treatment programs around the country that prove families do not need to be separated in order for them to achieve success in treatment and recovery.

Substance use is also a growing problem among female youth. Girls have caught up to boys in initiating use of illicit drugs and alcohol. Their use is often tied to self-esteem issues, depression, and peer pressure, but often prevention and treatment programming lacks adequate techniques to address these risk factors.

College students are also susceptible to the pressures to use substances. About 40 percent of college students report binge drinking. According to college administrators, alcohol specifically was involved in 21 percent of all cases of student attrition. About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking, including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades. Other drug use, including marijuana and prescription drug abuse, is also of concern. ONDCP and the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services are collaborating with university leaders to more effectively address the high rates of substance use and its consequences among college students.

Evidence-based Policy

Though illicit drug use and its consequences are exacting a toll in the United States, there is reason for hope. Decades of research have shown that a comprehensive approach, focused on reducing both supply and demand, can achieve safe and healthy outcomes for individuals and communities. There are no simple solutions to the drug problem in America. Everyone must work to keep young people healthy and drug-free, intervene before drug use becomes chronic, get help to those who suffer from addiction, support families and individuals on the path to sustained recovery, use law enforcement tools when appropriate, and bolster the efforts of our partners abroad.

The *National Drug Control Strategy* lays out practical steps that can reduce drug use and its consequences.



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