



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DOJ OIG Releases Report on DEA's Community-Based Efforts to Combat the Opioid Crisis

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a report examining the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) community-based efforts to combat the opioid crisis.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found the DEA had deployed its 360 Strategy, a program intended to combat opioid abuse, in 20 communities across the U.S., where it helped to increase awareness of opioid-related issues, provide training, build anti-drug coalitions, and create online resources available to the public at no charge. However, we also identified areas for improvement in the DEA's pilot city selection process, allocation of resources, and collaborative efforts with other federal entities tasked with combatting the opioid crisis. We further found that, despite multiple oversight efforts, the DEA still lacks an outcome-oriented performance measurement strategy to assess the effectiveness of its community outreach efforts, and we identified potential opportunities to reduce misconceptions surrounding medication-assisted treatment.

The OIG's specific findings in the report released today include:

- **DEA Can Improve How it Uses Data to Allocate its Resources:** During our audit, the DEA relied primarily on national and state level mortality data to decide the cities on which it would focus its community-based efforts to combat heroin and opioid use. However, while mortality data provides a comprehensive overview of public health issues in the United States, it also contains gaps that may hinder the DEA's ability to identify communities in critical need of assistance. In our judgment, a review of DEA field data, which analyzes substances such as fentanyl from an availability and seizure standpoint, would strengthen the DEA's ability to ensure its resources are deployed to communities most in need of opioid-related assistance.
- **DEA Should Enhance its Outcome-Oriented Performance Measurement Strategy:** We found that the DEA lacks effective outcome-oriented performance measurements, an issue also identified in our 2003 Audit of the DOJ Drug Demand Reduction Activities. While the DEA has taken steps to improve its performance measurement strategy, clearly defined goals and expected outcomes prior to project implementation would assist the DEA in effectively assessing the overall impact of its community outreach efforts.
- **DEA Would Benefit From a Comprehensive Review of its Opioid-Related Media Efforts:** A cornerstone of the DEA's community outreach efforts is a media campaign referred to as "Wake Up," which is intended to raise awareness of opioid-related issues and provide resources for opioid-specific information. However, the DEA has not consistently established performance metrics to

assess the impact of these efforts and has struggled to generate significant public traffic to the websites where the resources are provided.

- **DEA Should Enhance its Collaborative Efforts with Other Entities Situated to Provide Opioid-Related Assistance:** As the DEA is primarily a law enforcement agency, effective collaboration with other federal and non-federal entities is necessary in order to provide a comprehensive response to the opioid epidemic. However, we found that the DEA's collaborative efforts with DOJ grant making agencies are limited. These agencies provide millions of dollars in opioid-related funding to community organizations and local law enforcement across the United States each year. Enhanced collaboration with these agencies may improve DEA's long-term efforts to sustain progress in the communities it assists.

This report contains 5 recommendations to the DEA to enhance the DEA's community-based efforts to combat the opioid crisis. The DEA agreed with all the recommendations.

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