



Embassy of the United States of America

Local Leaders Reduce U.S. Drug Demand



Across the United States, thousands of community leaders are working to implement a variety of innovative, compassionate and evidence-based drug policies to reduce U.S. demand for illegal drugs, says the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Ten such leaders — educators, physicians, law enforcement professionals, social workers and people in recovery for substance abuse — were recently honored at the White House as “Champions of Change.” All represent organizations and programs that tackle illegal drug use by emphasizing a public-health approach over incarceration: a key theme of President Obama’s anti-drug strategy.

The president’s strategy aims to prevent drug use before it begins and to help addicts enter treatment, while also cooperating with

neighboring countries on law enforcement. Aggressively working to reduce U.S. drug consumption not only improves public health and safety in the United States, but also deprives violent transnational criminal organizations of an important source of income, according to the ONDCP.

U.S. “Champions of Change” demonstrate that demand-reduction policies can sharply reduce drug use and its consequences, said ONDCP Communications Director Rafael Lemaitre.

Daniel Gannon, a 25-year veteran of Rhode Island’s Providence Police Department, is a “Champion of Change” whose efforts in the Lockwood neighborhood of Providence have made a substantial difference over a five-year span.

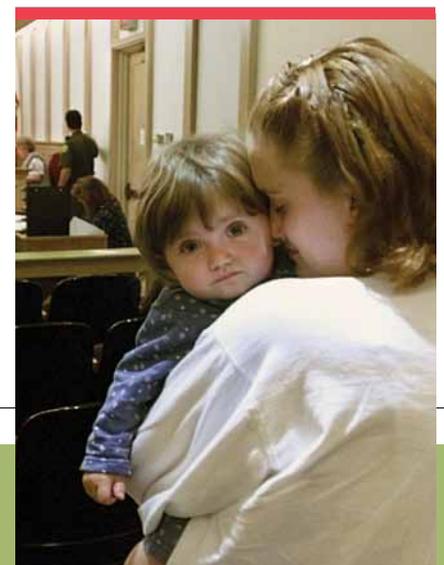
In 2006, Gannon helped introduce the Drug Market Intervention program, which disrupts open-air drug markets by directly engaging drug dealers. The program creates and enforces clear, predictable sanctions while also providing a range of services — including

drug treatment — to low-level offenders, giving them a chance to break the cycle of drug use, trafficking and incarceration.

“It takes the really bad drug runners off the streets,” but also helps those who are not hard-core drug abusers “so they can be returned to their communities,” said Gannon. The program has been adopted in jurisdictions across the United States, and “it’s been successful everywhere.”

Cindy Schaidler, another “Champion of Change,” is executive

A mother waits to appear before a judge at a drug court in Auburn, California. Drug courts place low-level drug offenders in treatment instead of jail. © AP Images



Top: Officials, including Kentucky Gov. Ernie Fletcher, center right, break ground in Ewart, Kentucky, for the Cumberland Hope Community Center, a residential addiction recovery center for women. © AP Images

director of the Casa Grande Alliance, a community-based drug abuse prevention coalition in Casa Grande, Arizona. Each year, the organization reaches more than 20,000 people with its prevention materials and messages, and its efforts are credited with significantly reducing drug use among youth as well as underage drinking in the Casa Grande area.

“We’re a 45-member, completely voluntary community coalition; our goal is to form partnerships and work together to prevent drug abuse,” said Schaidler. “We want to see our community be a place of safety and joy.” The alliance has served as a model for similar programs in other countries: Schaidler has worked with members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland in community development techniques during their transition from the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

U.S. interdiction and enforcement efforts, too, are increasingly coupled with youth-based drug abuse prevention efforts, as “Champion of Change” Timothy Wagner explained. Wagner is director of the South Florida High Intensity Drug



Men pray at the Sacramento Recovery House in Sacramento, California. © AP Images

Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force Program, and under his leadership, the South Florida HIDTA dismantled or disrupted 131 drug trafficking/drug money-laundering organizations in 2010.

While the South Florida HIDTA brings together federal, state and local agencies’ resources to work cooperatively and share intelligence, it also administers teen-oriented programs that educate youngsters about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. “As long as the demand is there and the profit is there, law enforcement will not be a complete solution,” said Wagner.

The work of these “Champions of Change,” and others, complements the president’s vision of a balanced strategy instead of “an unproductive, enforcement-only ‘war on drugs’ approach,” said ONDCP’s Lemaitre. The White House supports the expansion of drug courts as an alternative to prison for nonviolent offenders and the use of family-centered re-entry programs that help

ex-offenders successfully transition into society.

Many community-based initiatives offering substance-abuse treatment, employment, mentoring and other services can be duplicated around the United States and also outside the country, and ONDCP is always interested in innovative new programs, said Lemaitre.

“There is no simple, straightforward fix to America’s drug problem,” he said. A broad approach “that blends drug treatment, smart law enforcement and effective alternatives to incarceration ... can break the vicious cycle of drug use and crime, thereby saving countless lives and taxpayer dollars and helping to make it possible for all Americans to achieve their full potential.”

To learn more about U.S. drug-control policies, visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp> on the White House website.

Andrea Baker of Tulsa, Oklahoma, holds up her graduation certificate from the Women in Recovery program. The program is an alternative to jail for nonviolent female offenders with alcohol and drug addictions. © AP Images



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