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Obama Administration Releases 2013 National Drug Policy Strategy

Action Plan Details Support for Most Significant Expansion of Drug Treatment in America in Generations; Emphasizes Drug Policy Reform; Policies Treat Drug Addiction as Public Health Issue, Not Just a Criminal Justice Issue

(Baltimore, MD) - Today, Gil Kerlikowske, Director of National Drug Control Policy, released the 2013 National Drug Control Strategy, the Obama Administration's primary blueprint for drug policy in the United States. The science-based plan for reform contains a series of over 100 specific actions to reduce drug use and its consequences and expand prevention, treatment, and alternatives to incarceration.

The programs and policy reforms set forth in the 2013 *Strategy* are built upon decades of scientific research demonstrating that addiction is a chronic disease of the brain that can be successfully prevented and treated, not a moral failure on the part of the individual. The *Strategy* directs Federal agencies to expand community-based efforts to prevent drug use before it begins, empower healthcare workers to intervene early at the first signs of a substance use disorder, expand access to treatment for those who need it, and support the millions of Americans in recovery.

The *Strategy* details actions to implement the most significant expansion of access to substance use treatment in generations. Through [a new rule](#) made possible by the [Affordable Care Act](#), insurers will now be required to cover treatment for substance use disorders just as they would for any other chronic disease. Specifically, this new rule expands mental health and substance use disorder benefits and Federal parity protections for 62 million Americans,¹ making it a key element in the Administration's public health approach to drug policy in the United States.

The *Strategy* also contains action items in support of a "smart on crime" approach to drug enforcement, protecting communities from domestic and international drug-related crime while diverting non-violent drug offenders into treatment instead of prison. As part of this approach, the *Strategy* highlights promising criminal justice reforms, including drug courts and smart probation programs that reduce incarceration rates, along with community-based policing programs that break the cycle of drug use, crime, and incarceration while focusing limited enforcement resources on more serious offenses.

"President Obama believes in the pursuit of an America built to last – a Nation with an educated, skilled workforce that has the knowledge, energy, and expertise to succeed in a highly competitive global marketplace," said Kerlikowske. "For too many Americans, this future is clouded by drug use and substance use disorders, which inhibit the ability of our citizens to remain healthy and safe and to achieve their full potential. This plan represents a smarter approach to drug policy in America – one based on the premise that addiction is a disease that can be prevented and treated. We must address drug use as a public health issue, not just a criminal justice issue."

"For too long," said Devin Fox, Executive Director of Young People in Recovery, "millions of Americans in recovery from addiction and their families, friends, and supporters—including young people like us—

were absent from the debate about drug policy. Today, we are a powerful and growing movement, achieving real progress in lifting the stigma associated with substance use disorders and removing barriers to sustained recovery. The Obama Administration's historic focus on recovery adds to the momentum we need to help shift our country to a recovery-oriented system."

"Science should inform policy decisions about public health and safety in America," said Dr. Nora D. Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, part of the National Institutes of Health. "Groundbreaking advances in addiction research have contributed to our understanding of addiction as a brain disease that can be prevented as well as effectively treated. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with ONDCP to ensure the policies set forth in the *National Drug Control Strategy* are informed by science."

Overall drug use in the United States has dropped substantially over the past 30 years. In response to comprehensive efforts to address drug use at the local, state, Federal, and international levels, the rate of Americans using illicit drugs [has dropped by roughly one-third since the late 70s](#). More recently, there has been [a 50 percent drop in the rate of current cocaine use, and meth use has dropped by one-third since 2006](#). To build on this progress and support the public health and safety approach outlined in the *Strategy*, the Obama Administration has requested more than \$10.7 billion to support drug education programs and expand access to drug treatment for people suffering from substance use disorders. The FY 2014 Budget request also includes \$9.6 billion for domestic law enforcement, \$3.7 billion for interdiction, and \$1.5 billion for international programs.

To read the *Strategy* and learn more about the Administration plan, visit: www.wh.gov/drugpolicyreform

For a fact sheet on U.S. Drug Policy, click [here](#).

The Office of National Drug Control Policy seeks to foster healthy individuals and safe communities by effectively leading the Nation's effort to reduce drug use and its consequences.

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¹ Beronio, K. et al, ASPE Issue Brief: Affordable Care Act Expands Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefits and Federal Parity Protections for 62 Million Americans, Department of Health and Human Services, February 20, 2013. Available at: http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2013/mental/rb_mental.cfm