
FOREWORD

Americans understand the value of working together. We know that when we pool our resources and combine our strengths—when we unite as a community—there is little we cannot accomplish.

Large or small, urban or rural, communities throughout America confront many of the same threats. Among the biggest threats facing our cities, towns, and neighborhoods today is illegal drug abuse. Drugs destroy lives and spoil the quality of life for entire communities.

Government programs alone cannot stop the flow of drugs or keep people from using them. Real progress requires the active support and participation of key leaders, professionals, and concerned citizens at the local level. With this in mind, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has launched the Major Cities Initiative—an ambitious program designed to promote and energize partnerships among those working to stop drug abuse in some of America’s largest cities. The idea is to take a close look at the drug threat in selected areas, then bring experts and local leaders together to identify which approaches are working and devise new ones as appropriate.



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Drugs are not exclusively a big-city problem, of course. But America’s large population centers contain significant concentrations of chronic drug users, as well as drug markets that sustain, and are sustained by, their habits. Reducing substance abuse in our biggest cities, therefore, can bring about a measurable decline in the Nation’s overall drug problem and, at the same time, help to achieve President George W. Bush’s 2002 goal of reducing drug use by 25 percent in five years.

The success of the Major Cities Initiative is encouraging, and not just for the cities targeted in the original plan. It suggests that the same approach can have an even broader application, serving as a framework for any city, county, town, village, or neighborhood fighting the scourge of illegal drugs.

This booklet represents the lessons ONDCP and our partners have learned and the knowledge we have gained in the course of administering the Major Cities project. It is, in effect, a “how to” manual for citizens anywhere who want to adopt the Major Cities model for their own communities.

The document does not pretend to have all the answers. Because the nature of the drug threat differs from city to city, there are no hard-and-fast rules for addressing the problem, just as there is no one-size-fits-all formula for stopping drug use. In each community, the specific methods must be tailored to address local needs.

However, through our experience we have identified techniques and principles that stand out as the most effective and most likely to bring success. A program built on the concepts described on these pages can help communities define the threat, draft a plan, and stay on track as they work to improve their response to illegal drugs. The guidelines presented here are intended to stimulate cities, counties, and towns across the United States to mobilize, form partnerships, share resources, and take the steps necessary to bring about a meaningful reduction in drug abuse.

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