

# High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program

The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program, created by Congress with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, provides assistance to Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States.

The purpose of the program is to reduce drug trafficking and production in the United States by:

- Facilitating cooperation among Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to share information and implement coordinated enforcement activities;
- Enhancing law enforcement intelligence sharing among Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies;
- Providing reliable law enforcement intelligence to law enforcement agencies needed to design effective enforcement strategies and operations; and
- Supporting coordinated law enforcement strategies which maximize use of available resources to reduce the supply of illegal drugs in designated areas and in the United States as a whole.

There are currently 28 HIDTAs, which include approximately 18.3 percent of all counties in the United States and a little over 65.5 percent of the U.S. population. HIDTA-designated counties are located in 49 states as well as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the District of Columbia, and the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon. View a map of the HIDTAs [here](#).

In August 2015, the Office of National Drug Control Policy announced an unprecedented partnership among regional HIDTA programs to address the heroin threat facing those communities through public health-public safety partnerships. The HIDTA Heroin Response Strategy now covers 20 States in eight HIDTAs: Appalachia, Atlanta/Carolinas, Michigan, Ohio, New England, New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia/Camden, and Washington/Baltimore. This HIDTA Heroin Response Strategy is fostering a collaborative network of public health-

public safety partnerships to address the heroin and opioid epidemic from multiple perspectives.

Each HIDTA assesses the drug trafficking threat in its defined area for the upcoming year, develops a strategy to address that threat, designs initiatives to implement the strategy, proposes funding needed to carry out the initiatives, and prepares an annual report describing its performance the previous year. A central feature of the HIDTA program is the discretion granted to the Executive Boards to design and implement initiatives that confront drug trafficking threats in each HIDTA. The program's 59 Intelligence and Investigative Support Centers help HIDTA's identify new targets and trends, develop threat assessments, de-conflict targets and events, and manage cases.

## **HIDTA Activities**

The HIDTA program currently funds 752 initiatives throughout the nation, including:

- Enforcement initiatives comprising multi-agency investigative, interdiction, and prosecution activities;
- Intelligence and information-sharing initiatives;
- Support for programs that provide assistance beyond the core enforcement and intelligence and information-sharing initiatives; and
- Drug use prevention and drug treatment initiatives.

Today, prevention and treatment initiatives are an integral part of the HIDTA program. Currently, all 28 regional HIDTA programs support prevention initiatives across the country, including the 5 SWB HIDTA regions. The HIDTA members work with community-based coalitions and adhere to evidence-based prevention practices, such as community mobilization and organizational change. For example;

- The Safe and Sound Initiative of the Wisconsin HIDTA, which grew out of the weed and seed program of the 1980s, is an integral part of Milwaukee strategy to reduce drug related violent crime through targeted law enforcement, community building and proactive engagement of youth and activities, which increase prosocial skills and behaviors, and teach drug, gang, gun and crime resistance. Safe and sound uses a three-pronged strategy to unite residents, youth, law enforcement and community resources to build safe and empowered neighborhoods.

- The Rio Arriba County Empowerment (RACE) Project of the Southwest Border HIDTA – New Mexico region, is a community-based prevention initiative that focuses on drug prevention activities in the Espanola Valley which has been plagued with multigenerational heroine abuse. The RACE Project employs a balanced approach between both supply reduction and demand reduction supporting ONDCP's three-pronged approach of enforcement, prevention and treatment to create the necessary balance to effectively impact drug abuse the most serious threat to this region's public health and safety. Programs and services built prevention capacity and prepare communities to provide effective prevention services.
- The Houston HIDTA Drug Prevention and Awareness Initiative presents a concerted and collaborative drug prevention and awareness effort. This initiative involves a partnership with the Houston Mayor's office Crackdown Coalition. This coalition offers a good mix of law enforcement and treatment/prevention health professionals, working in partnership to increase awareness of drug trafficking, substance abuse, and community drug use trends, while also working toward breaking the cycle of addiction and incarceration. The Houston HIDTA's partnership with the Houston Mayor's office Crackdown Coalition has opened up opportunities for the HIDTA to participate in additional community outreach events. One such partnership, was with the Bay Area Youth Alliance Coalition which serves the greater Galveston area. The Houston HIDTA has also partnered with the Success through Addiction Recovery (STAR) Court, which bridges the gap between criminal justice and therapeutic approaches to defendants with drug dependencies.

The HIDTA program also supports several key domestic projects. These national level initiatives are administered by the National HIDTA Assistance Center (NHAC) and overseen by the HIDTA Directors Committee. These programs are the Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) program; the National Emerging Threat Initiative (NETI); and the National Marijuana Initiative (NMI).

Drug trafficking is a significant problem in Indian Country, and ONDCP has made it a priority to collaborate with tribal leadership to enhance law enforcement and prevention responses. HIDTAs are uniquely positioned to work with local and tribal communities to promote and participate in community-based drug prevention programs. Currently, 10 HIDTA programs are collaborating in enforcement operations and training with Tribal Nations: Atlanta-Carolinas, Nevada, New York/New Jersey, Northern California, Northwest, Oregon, SWB Arizona Region, SWB New Mexico Region, Texoma, and Wisconsin.

# HIDTA Initiatives

## **Domestic Highway Enforcement**

The Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) Strategy promotes collaborative, intelligence-led, unbiased policing in coordinated and mutually supportive multi-jurisdictional law enforcement efforts on the Nation's highways. The DHE strategy both improves the investigative efforts of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) in attacking drug trafficking organizations and has significant impact on traffic safety, homeland security, and other crimes.

Goals:

- To enhance investigations leading to the disruption and dismantlement of the drug trafficking and money laundering organizations that use the Nation's highways as a means of transporting illegal drugs, currency, and other contraband and illicit commodities from one location to another
- To cultivate and share intelligence information pertaining to individuals and organizations who use the Nation's highways as a means of transporting illegal drugs, currency, and other illicit commodities or create other threats and hazards on those highways
- To promote shared operational planning, intelligence, and coordination among Federal, state, and local law enforcement to improve their ability to effectively address all crimes, threats, and hazards relating to our Nation's highways

Given the wide footprint of the HIDTA program, a coordinated nationwide highway enforcement strategy contributes significantly to reducing criminal activity and enhancing public safety on the Nation's major transportation corridors. Such an approach builds on the strengths of both the HIDTA program and state and local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) which have historically provided resources to ensure the Nation's highways are safe for citizens and not used for illegal activities, such as drug trafficking.

The DHE strategy has been implemented within nine designated DHE regions. These regions are designated by ONDCP in consultation with HIDTA directors. The DHE Regional Coordinators are currently the HIDTA directors in the following HIDTAs:

- Region 1 – Southwest Border HIDTA - South Texas Region
- Region 2 – Northwest HIDTA

- Region 3 – Rocky Mountain HIDTA
- Region 4 – Midwest HIDTA
- Region 5 – Chicago HIDTA
- Region 6 – Michigan HIDTA
- Region 7 – New England HIDTA
- Region 8 – Philadelphia/Camden HIDTA
- Region 9 – Atlanta HIDTA

### **National Emerging Threats Initiative**

The National Emerging Threats Initiative (NETI) is a key domestic project that is administered by the National HIDTA Assistance Center (NHAC) and overseen by the HIDTA Directors Committee (HDC). NETI is a poly-drug national trends, intelligence and best practices sharing initiative designed to coordinate HIDTA emerging drug threat strategies in affected HIDTA areas in the United States. The initiative focuses on systemic approaches to addressing the illegal drug supply including the divergent use of new drugs along with the collateral issues of each.

NETI accomplishes this by identifying emerging drug threats and their patterns as well as addressing each threat through the use of best practices, promoting cooperation among public safety, public health, regulators, treatment, and prevention entities, while providing innovative solutions to identified emerging drug threats. There is a NETI National Coordinator in San Diego, California whose office is based at the Southwest Border/San Diego-Imperial Valley HIDTA and there are currently two Deputy Coordinators, one based with the Los Angeles HIDTA and the other based in the Atlanta/Carolina HIDTA. The NETI Coordinator manages all Deputy Coordinators activities, and all coordinators provide national coverage for the initiative's mission.

### **Prevention**

While the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program's primary mission is to dismantle and disrupt drug trafficking organizations, expanding prevention efforts offers HIDTAs the ability to address the drug threat in a community in a more balanced fashion.

Today, prevention and treatment initiatives are an integral part of the HIDTA program. Currently all 28 HIDTAs, including the five Southwest Border HIDTA regions, support prevention initiatives across the country. The HIDTA members work with

community-based coalitions and adhere to evidence-based prevention practices, such as community mobilization and organizational change.

Examples of HIDTA Prevention Initiatives:

- The New York/New Jersey HIDTA's Drug Prevention and Awareness initiative was created in an effort to reduce drug abuse and overdoses. This initiative focuses on providing both media campaigns and outreach programs to inform the community of the dangers of illegal drug use, including prescription drug abuse. The New Jersey Drug Enforcement Administration has joined the partnership for a drug-free New Jersey to promote the DO NO HARM: "Keeping it Legal and Safe in the Medical Community" education and awareness symposium for physicians and other medical professionals in New Jersey. This symposium is a continuum of the New Jersey Division's proactive response to nationwide prescription drug epidemic. The symposium engages physicians and medical professionals in the prevention of the prescription drug epidemic, educates them on the link between prescription medication and heroin abuse, and provides a forum for the discussion and development of best practices addressing the epidemic of prescription drug abuse and the rising levels of heroin abuse and deaths.
- The Appalachia HIDTA Prevention Initiative is a multifaceted prevention/education initiative that will serve all designated counties in the four states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. The goal of the initiative is to deliver education on drug misuse to local coalitions, youth programming, supporting research, advocacy and service in order to create safer communities by preventing the disease of substance dependency. One of the programs this initiative will coordinate is called "On the Move Prevention Initiative" which partners the HIDTA with Operation UNITE (Unlawful Narcotics, Investigation, Treatment, and Education), a program that has been in existence since 2003 and has experienced much success since its inception.

# HIDTA Designation Process & Authorizing Language

A coalition of law enforcement agencies from an area may petition for designation as a HIDTA, generally working with the closest established HIDTA, requesting that the ONDCP Director designate specific counties as additions to the respective HIDTA.

## **Qualifying Criteria**

The [Office of National Drug Control Reauthorization Act of 2006](#) (P.L. 109-469) established the following criteria for determination of designation as a HIDTA:

- The area is a significant center of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution;
- State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies have committed resources to respond to the drug trafficking problem in the area, thereby indicating a determination to respond aggressively to the problem;
- Drug-related activities in the area are having a significant harmful impact in the area and in other areas of the country; and
- A significant increase in allocation of Federal resources is necessary to respond adequately to drug related activities in the area.

## **County Designation**

The ONDCP Director, in consultation with the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Homeland Security, heads of the National Drug Control Program agencies, and the Governor of each applicable state, may designate any specified area of the United States as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

## **Designation Petitions**

A coalition of interested law enforcement agencies from an area may petition for designation as a HIDTA.

1. Petitions must specify the geographic area for which HIDTA designation is requested. Areas are designated by county; therefore, such areas must be identified in the petition.

2. Petitions must state specifically which law enforcement agencies are making the petition, a responsible official for each agency making the petition, and a point of contact for the coalition of interested law enforcement agencies.
3. Petitions must include an assessment of the threat of illegal drugs in the area for which HIDTA designation is requested and must specifically respond to each of the four criteria mentioned above.
4. Each of the requirements must be addressed and justified with sufficient information/documentation for each county proposed in the petition.
5. If the petition proposes to designate additional counties to an already-established HIDTA region, the petition shall include a letter from the Chairman of that HIDTA's Executive Board indicating that the Executive Board has reviewed the petition and sets forth its position related to the petition for designation.

Upon receipt of a petition, ONDCP shall send an acknowledgement letter to the requester to confirm receipt of the petition and provide an assigned number for further reference. Petitions will be reviewed by ONDCP on a regular basis. The review will include a recommendation regarding the merit of the petition to the Director by a panel of qualified, independent experts who are designated by the Director. After the review is completed, the requestor will be notified in writing regarding the disposition of the petition. The ONDCP Director is solely responsible for making designation and funding decisions relating to the HIDTA program.

# HIDTA Points of Contact

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