

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

June 14, 2013

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Behavioral health concerns—mental illness and substance abuse disorders—affect a large number of people and can take a serious toll on individuals, families, and communities. In 2009, an estimated 23.5 million Americans aged 12 and older needed treatment for substance use,¹ and in 2008, an estimated 9.8 million adults aged 18 and older in the United States had a serious mental illness.² Mental illness among young people is particularly concerning with about two million youth aged 12 to 17 reportedly having a major depressive episode during the prior year.³ Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness and substance use disorders begin by age 14 and three-fourths by age 24.⁴ Prevention, treatment, and recovery services for behavioral health are important parts of improving the health status of impacted individuals, their families, and the communities in which they reside.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, has a mission to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. It carries out this work through a combination of competitive discretionary and block grant programs to States, local communities, and organizations that provide or facilitate treatment and prevention services. With a total agency

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2010). *Results from the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Vol. I. Summary of national findings*. (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-38A, DHHS Publication No. SMA 10-4856Findings). Rockville, MD: SAMHSA.

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2009). *Results from the 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings*. (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-36, DHHS Publication No. SMA 09-4434). Rockville, MD: SAMHSA.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of *DSM-IV* disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(6), 593–602. 8 World Health Organization (WHO). (2004). *Promoting mental health: Concepts, emerging evidence, practice. Summary report*.

budget of about \$3.6 billion in Fiscal Year 2012, several thousand projects were awarded funds by SAMHSA. Of this total, nearly \$1 billion was allocated to SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) for mental health-related programs. Adequate oversight of grants can not only help ensure that funds are being used appropriately by grantees, but can also provide a source of ongoing information about implementation and accomplishments that can be used generally to help improve programs over time.

We would like the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to provide information on SAMHSA's CMHS oversight of its grants for programs, with particular attention to monitoring that occurs during the award period. Specifically, we seek answers to the following questions:

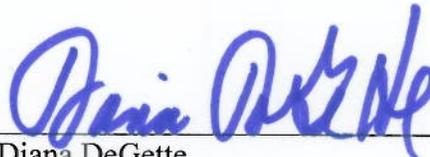
1. How does SAMHSA's CMHS ensure that its grant spending supports SAMHSA's mission, including the agency's long-term strategic goals?
2. What performance measures and metrics regarding program activities does SAMHSA's CMHS require from grantees during and at the conclusion of an award period?
3. How does SAMHSA's CMHS review and use this information submitted by grantees?
4. What role do evidence-based criteria play in SAMHSA's CMHS review and approval of grant applications, and how does SAMHSA conduct such evaluations?
5. How much program-level funding has SAMHSA's CMHS devoted to grants and/or programs supporting treatments for individuals with serious mental illness?

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Sam Spector with the Majority staff at (202) 225-2927 or Stacia Cardille with the Minority staff at (202) 226-3400.

Sincerely,



Tim Murphy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations