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# **Recommendation Follow Up at GAO**

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**Jill Verret, Assistant Director**

**Audit Policy and Quality Assurance (APQA)**

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## Recommendation Follow-Up: Built Into Performance

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- GAO reports annually in the Performance and Accountability Report on two performance measures related to recommendations:
  - Percentage of written products with at least one recommendation, and
  - Percentage of recommendations made four years prior to a fiscal year that have been implemented.
- Given the importance of recommendations to our work and performance, recommendation follow-up is also built into our processes.
  - Over 1,600 recommendations made each year
  - Over 5,000 open recommendations for follow-up

## Recommendation Follow-Up: Built Into Processes

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- Analysts follow up on the reviewed entity at least once per year to determine the extent to which GAO's recommendations have been implemented by:
  - Discussing recommendation status with cognizant agency officials,
  - Obtaining copies of agency documents supporting the recommendations' implementation, and
  - Performing sufficient work to verify the recommended actions are being taken and, to the extent possible, that the desired results are being achieved.

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## Recommendation Follow-Up: Built Into Processes

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- Analysts review the information and determine if recommendation status should be recorded as:
  - Closed - implemented
  - Open
  - Closed - not implemented
    - Requires approval by team's Managing Director

## Recommendation Follow-Up: Built Into Processes

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- Analysts update the recommendation status in an internal web-based application.  

  - A senior executive and staff from GAO's Audit Policy and Quality Assurance team then review the updates to ensure:
    - Congressional or agency actions are clearly described,
    - the status update is logical, and,
    - where possible, implementation dates are included.  

  - Once approved, the information is incorporated into GAO's Status of Open Recommendations database, which is publicly available on GAO's external website ([gao.gov](http://gao.gov)).
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# Recommendation Follow-Up: Example from GAO.GOV


## FEDERAL PRISON SYSTEM:

### Justice Has Used Alternatives to Incarceration, But Could Better Measure Program Outcomes

GAO-16-516: Published: Jun 23, 2016. Publicly Released: Jun 23, 2016.

HIGHLIGHTS

RECOMMENDATIONS


VIEW REPORT (PDF, 61 PAGES) 

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

1. **Recommendation:** To help ensure that USAOs consistently track the extent of use of all pretrial diversion alternatives, the Attorney General should direct the EOUSA to develop guidance on the appropriate way to enter data on the use of Title 9 and court-involved pretrial diversion alternatives, including the timing of entry and use of revised codes.

**Agency Affected:** Department of Justice

**Status:** Closed - Implemented 

**Comments:** We found that DOJ has used two types of pretrial diversion as alternatives to incarceration--Title 9 pretrial diversions, which are at the discretion of the U.S. Attorneys' Offices; and court-involved pretrial diversion practices, which involve additional stakeholders, including federal judges and defense counsel. However, we found that DOJ's data on the use of pretrial diversions were unreliable because DOJ had not issued guidance to attorneys in its U.S. Attorneys' Offices on when and whether to enter a pretrial diversion code into its data system, which could result in inconsistent and unreliable data. As a result, we recommended that DOJ's Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA) develop guidance on the appropriate way to enter data on the use of Title 9 and court-involved pretrial diversion alternatives, including the timing of entry and the use of revised codes. In September 2016, EOUSA provided guidance to staff in its U.S. Attorneys' Offices that outlines (1) the use of two new pretrial diversion codes--one for Title 9 pretrial diversion, and one for court-involved diversion, and (2) the appropriate entries to create and dispose of each type of pretrial diversion, including those successfully completed, unsuccessfully completed, and administratively terminated. As a result, DOJ will have more reliable and complete data to determine what types of pretrial diversion are being used, in what districts, how frequently, and how successfully. This guidance is consistent with our recommendation.

## Recommendation Follow-Up: Other Key Efforts

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- Priority recommendation letters:
  - Letters sent to heads of most federal departments to acknowledge progress toward implementing our priority recommendations and to draw attention to those still warranting action
- Duplication, overlap, and fragmentation work:
  - Highlighted the status of key recommendations in our annual work in this area
- Received support from Congress, including legislation requiring federal agencies to report on how they plan to implement our recommendations.

# Recommendation Follow-Up at GAO

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Questions?