

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**Office of Justice Programs**

[CJP (OJJDP) No. 1107]

ZRIN No. 1121-ZA54

Notice of the Fiscal Year 1996 Missing and Exploited Children's Program Final Program Plan and Announcement of Discretionary Competitive Assistance Grant

AGENCY: Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Justice.

ACTION: Notice of final program plan and announcement of a discretionary assistance grant.

SUMMARY: The Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) pursuant to the Missing Children's Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5771-5780) is authorized to support research, demonstration, or services programs to educate parents, provide information, aid communities, increase knowledge, address the needs of missing children and their families, and establish or operate statewide clearinghouses to assist in locating and recovering missing children. OJJDP published its Title IV Missing and Exploited Children's Program Fiscal Year 1996 Proposed Program Plan in the Federal Register on July 17, 1996, for a 60-day period of public comment. The Office received three letters commenting on the Proposed Plan. All comments have been considered in the development of the Final Program Plan for the Title IV Missing and Exploited Children's Program for Fiscal Year (FY) 1996.

DATES: Applications under this program must be received by 5 p.m. e.s.t., February 10, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Applications must be received by mail or hand-delivered to: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Missing and Exploited Children's Program, c/o Juvenile Justice Resource Center, 1600 Research Boulevard, Mail Stop 2K, Rockville, Maryland, 20850. Application kits can be obtained by contacting the Juvenile Justice Resource Center at the above address or at 301-251-5535.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shay Bilchik, Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 633 Indiana Avenue NW., 7th Floor, Washington, D.C., 20531.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments on Proposed Fiscal Year 1996 Program Plan

One letter contained several comments on the Proposed Plan, while the other two letters provided just one comment each. One of the single-comment letters commented on Goal 1 of the Proposed Plan, Increase Awareness of Problems Relating to Missing and Exploited Children, and one expressed interest in the proposed Parent Resource Support Network Program.

The following is a summary of the substantive comments on the Proposed Plan and OJJDP's responses. Each comment was made by a single respondent.

Comment: Support was expressed for OJJDP's goal of "increasing awareness of problems relating to missing and exploited children", with a suggestion that this goal would be furthered by the inclusion of parents of children who are victims of violent crimes.

Response: OJJDP agrees and will include parents of children who are victims of violent crime in this goal.

Comment: Strong support was given to the proposed Parent Resource Support Network Program.

Response: The Final Program Plan includes establishment of this Network through a competitive award.

Comment: With regard to the establishment of a Parent Resource Support Network, a data bank of missing children should be established by the grantee. The grantee should work closely with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

Response: The successful applicant will be expected to establish a working relationship with NCMEC because NCMEC serves as the national clearinghouse and resource center for missing and exploited children under a cooperative agreement with OJJDP. Cooperation between the Parent Resource Support Network and NCMEC will eliminate service duplication and enhance coordination of the national response to missing children cases. Applicants for the award to establish the Parent Resource Support Network may address the need for access to a missing children data base in their applications.

NCMEC currently has procedures that its case managers use to provide followup information to parents of missing children. In addition, OJJDP plans to work with its grantees, other missing children agencies or organizations, and interested parties to develop protocols for State clearinghouses, nonprofit organizations,

and NCMEC and to incorporate joint followup procedures and to provide information to parents of missing children and to law enforcement officials.

Comments: Three specific recommendations were made concerning the proposed Parent Resource Support Network: (a) Develop a computerized listing of all parents of missing children; (b) fund an annual conference for the parents of missing children; and (c) provide detailed information about how the money is to be spent for training and technical assistance.

Response: (a) Absent compelling evidence, OJJDP believes that the development of a computerized listing of parents of missing children would duplicate ongoing NCMEC efforts and would not be a prudent use of OJJDP funding.

(b) Because of the limited amount of available funds, OJJDP believes that a national conference for missing children parents would not be the best use of Title IV funding.

(c) Because the provision of accurate and appropriate advice is critical to the goals of the Parent Support Network, Missing Children program staff will have significant involvement with the grantee in curriculum development and the delivery of training. The successful applicant will set aside funds for training purposes.

Comment: Concern was expressed over the continuing need to rely on figures from the 1988 National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway (NISMA) Children.

Response: Under an OJJDP grant, Temple University was awarded a cooperative agreement in F.Y. 1995 to undertake the second NISMA study. The study is scheduled to be completed by 1999.

Comment: More information is needed about NCMEC's operations. The fact that so much program responsibility has been placed in the hands of one agency requires a —system of checks and balances— to assure NCMEC serves both missing children and their parents and law enforcement.

Response: As stated in the proposed plan, OJJDP will continue funding NCMEC in FY 1996, the third year of funding under a competitively awarded cooperative agreement. NCMEC's activities are carried out under the terms of that agreement. Some information maintained by NCMEC is confidential and not available for dissemination. NCMEC's access to various databases and its strong working relationships with law enforcement agencies

improves its capacity to assist in the recovery of missing children and ability to deliver services to parents.

Further, NCMEC's quarterly fiscal and program reports are available to the public and NCMEC provides additional information through annual reports and other publications. Interested parties should contact NCMEC at 703-235-3900. In addition, OJJDP program staff provide ongoing oversight of NCMEC expenditures and activities. NCMEC provides services that Title IV establishes as the responsibility of a national resource center and clearinghouse. OJJDP believes that NCMEC has always carried out these responsibilities conscientiously, responsibly, and in a manner intended to serve the best interests of America's missing children and their families.

Introduction to the Fiscal Year 1996 Program Plan

In 1995, local law enforcement reported 969,264 persons as missing to the FBI's National Crime Information Center Missing Person File. The FBI estimates that 85-90 percent of these reports represented persons under the age of 18. Many of these children were runaways, others are taken by noncustodial parents and used as pawns in contentious domestic situations, and still others are abducted by nonfamily members. Whatever the reason, each day in America too many children are reported missing to law enforcement.

Title IV of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended by the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984, established the Missing and Exploited Children's Program in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). In addition to providing assistance for research, demonstration, and service programs, the Missing Children's Assistance Act authorizes the use of Title IV funds to establish and support a national resource center and clearinghouse dedicated to missing and exploited children issues.

Fiscal Year 1996 Title IV funding is focused primarily on programs that are national in scope. The Office will continue to support the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which serves as the national clearinghouse and resource center. Since 1984 NCMEC has assisted in the recovery of more than 32,000 children, disseminated millions of publications, promoted information sharing through their online communications network linking 49 State clearinghouses, and provided technical assistance to parents, state and local missing children service agencies, and law enforcement

professionals. OJJDP recently awarded NCMEC additional funding to enhance the technical capacity of State clearinghouses communications network through the provision of new computers, scanners, and software.

As the competitively funded Title IV Training and Technical Assistance grantee, Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) of Appleton, Wisconsin will offer training courses pertaining to investigation of child abuse and of missing and exploited children and provide technical assistance to jurisdictions upon request. FVTC annually trains more than 4,000 prosecutors and professionals from law enforcement and child services agencies. FVTC also facilitated OJJDP's national training workshop for State clearinghouses and nonprofit organizations held in September 1996.

OJJDP has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Association of Missing and Exploited Children Organizations (AMECO) to develop national standards for nonprofit organizations that serve missing and exploited children and their families. AMECO will develop a standardized intake form, produce a quarterly newsletter covering missing and exploited children issues, and set standards for nonprofit agency efforts to locate and return missing children.

Under an interagency agreement with the FBI, OJJDP is providing funding to support new research by the Bureau's Child Abduction Serial Killer Unit (CASCU) to broaden law enforcement's understanding of homicidal pedophiles. This information will be used in FBI and OJJDP training initiatives. CASCU will also provide research-based information regarding investigative and interview strategies to law enforcement agencies.

Several important initiatives for missing children were initiated in FY 1995. OJJDP formed the Federal Agency Task Force for Missing and Exploited Children to complement the investigative work of the Morgan P. Hardiman Task Force, which was created by the 1994 Crime Act to assist State and local law enforcement with the most difficult missing and exploited children cases. The Federal Agency Task Force also focuses on broad coordination and policy issues. In May 1996, the Federal Agency Task Force released Federal Resources on Missing and Exploited Children: A Directory for Law Enforcement and Other Public and Private Agencies. The Directory contains information regarding services ranging from the immediate delivery of specialized forensic and investigative services at the scene of an abducted

child investigation to longer term training and prevention programs that improve community safety and enhance investigative resources of available Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

Fiscal Year 1996 Title IV funds will support the establishment of a support network to assist parents of missing children. This program, which is described in the request for proposals that follows this Plan, will further OJJDP's strategic vision of programs that provide services on a national scope.

Grant Program Announcement: Parent Resource Support Network

Purpose: To provide information, advice, and technical assistance to parents who are searching for a missing child.

Background: The National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway (NISMA) Children (Finkelhor, Hotaling, and Sedlak, 1990) estimated that in 1988 there were 4,600 nonfamily child abductions, 354,000 family child abductions, and 450,000 runaway children. NISMA also estimated that 200-300 stereotypical kidnappings take place annually of which an estimated 43 to 147 resulted in the murder of the child. Although these categories of missing children should be treated individually, a common factor links them: The victim parents who are searching for their children.

Research indicates that almost all families of missing children rely primarily on law enforcement personnel for information, support, and intervention following a child's disappearance. Indeed, State and local law enforcement agencies have the primary responsibility to investigate missing children cases. However, in an era of dwindling budgets and high violent crime rates, law enforcement agencies are hard pressed to concentrate resources on investigating missing children cases. Particularly for longer-term cases, this concentration of resources on violent crime often unintentionally places parents in a self-help status.

OJJDP has conducted several focus groups composed of parents representing the categories of stereotypical kidnaping, nonfamily abductions, and family abductions. The focus group members discussed government's response to their missing child incidents and suggested areas for enhancement. A common theme expressed in these focus groups was the need for a system to put victim parents in touch with one another. Victim parents cited support and advice from

other victim parents as both useful and credible.

Parents of missing children often express an interest in supporting other parents who are going through the ordeal of locating and recovering a missing child. These parents are determined to make their personal tragedies and experiences meaningful and actively seek opportunities to help other parents. They represent a reservoir of experience and caring that goes largely untapped. This program seeks to tap that reservoir to provide support to families of missing children.

Program Strategy: OJJDP will award a single cooperative agreement. The successful applicant will be expected to develop a recruiting and screening strategy, a case management system to track referrals and assistance provided, and a training curriculum for parent volunteers.

Eligibility Requirements: Applicants must be a State agency or local unit of local government, or a private nonprofit organization.

Goal: To support parents of missing children through the provision of accurate and appropriate information and other technical assistance services.

Objectives: The selected grantee will:

1. Develop a structure composed of parent volunteers who will provide support and technical assistance to other parents whose children are or have been missing.
2. Assist parents with support through information and advice regarding available programs and services.
3. Ensure that appropriate support through information and advice has been received by parents who are seeking assistance.

Selection Criteria: Applications will be rated by a peer review panel on the extent to which they meet the criteria below.

Problem(s) To Be Addressed (10 points)

Applicants must clearly identify the need for this project and demonstrate an understanding of the program concept.

Goals and Objectives (10 points)

Applicants must establish goals and objectives for this program that are

clearly defined, measurable, and attainable.

Project Design (35 points)

Applicants must present a clear workplan that contains program elements directly linked to the achievement of the project objectives. Applicants must explain in clear terms how parent volunteers will be recruited, screened, trained, and matched with victim parents. The workplan must indicate significant milestones in the project, the nature of products to be delivered, and due dates for products.

Management and Organizational Capability (35 points)

Applicants' management structure and staffing must be adequate and appropriate for the successful implementation of the project. Applicants must present a workplan that identifies responsible individuals, their time commitment, major tasks, and milestones. Key staff should have significant experience in missing children issues. Special preference shall be given to applicants who demonstrate working relationships with OJJDP's Title IV national resource center and clearinghouse and its training and technical assistance grantees.

Budget (10 points)

Applicants must provide a proposed budget that is complete, detailed, reasonable, allowable, and cost effective for the proposed activities.

Format: The narrative may not exceed 35 pages in length (excluding forms, assurances, and appendixes) and must be submitted on 8½- by 11-inch paper, double spaced on one side of the paper in a standard 10- or 12-point font.

Award Period: This project will be funded for 18 months and may be renewed for another 18 months based on grantee performance and availability of funds.

Award Amount: Up to \$125,000 is available for the first 18 months of this project.

Delivery Instructions: All application packages should be mailed or delivered to the Office Of Juvenile Justice and

Delinquency Prevention, c/o Juvenile Justice Resource Center, 1600 Research Boulevard, Mail Stop 2K, Rockville, Maryland 20850; 301-251-5535.

Note: In the lower left hand corner of the envelope, you must clearly write "Parent Support Network."

Due Date: Applicants are responsible for ensuring that the original and five copies of the application package are mailed or delivered by 5 p.m. EST on February 10, 1997.

Contact: For further information call Michael Medaris, Program Manager, Missing and Exploited Children's Program, 202-616-3637, or send an e-mail inquiry to medarism@ojp.usdoj.gov.

References

- D. Finkelhor, G. Hotaling, and A. Sedlak. 1990. Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway (NISMA) Children in America, First Report: Numbers and Characteristics, National Incidence Studies. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.
- C. Hatcher, C. Barton, L. Brooks. 1993. Families of Missing Children Final Report. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- L. Girdner and P. Hoff. 1994. Obstacles to the Recovery and Return of Parentally Abducted Children: Research Summary. Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. 1993. Nonprofit Services Provider's Handbook: Building an Effective Organization Serving Missing and Exploited Children and Their Families. Arlington, Va.
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. 1995. Recovery and Reunification of Missing Children: A Team Approach. Arlington, Va.

Dated: December 6, 1996.

Shay Bilchik,

Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

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