



Testimony

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JUVENILE JUSTICE:

Selected Issues Relating to OJJDP's Reauthorization

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Juvenile Justice: Selected Issues Relating to OJJDP's Reauthorization

The goal of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is to provide national leadership in addressing the issues of juvenile delinquency and in improving juvenile justice. OJJDP operated on a \$162 million appropriation in fiscal year 1995 with 71 authorized staff positions. The Office addresses juvenile justice issues primarily by administering a range of grants to states, territories, and public and private organizations. About 62 percent of OJJDP's fiscal year 1995 appropriation funded formula grants to states and territories. The 57 states and territories participating in the formula grant program can use the funds to meet juvenile justice and delinquency prevention needs that they identified in 3-year plans submitted to OJJDP. OJJDP is to do annual monitoring visits to each participating state and territory to determine whether they are doing the activities specified in their plans.

About 35 percent of OJJDP's fiscal year 1995 appropriation funded discretionary grants, the Office's primary mechanism for providing federal assistance directly to public and private juvenile justice organizations. The grants are to be awarded to applicants determined by OJJDP to be the most qualified to do work advertised in grant solicitations. Projects funded have been for research, demonstration projects, and/or training and technical assistance. OJJDP made 162 new discretionary grant awards for fiscal years 1993 through 1995.

GAO found that OJJDP had procedures in place for planning, soliciting, and awarding grants, as well as for auditing and monitoring activities on grant projects and communicating the results of the work to interested practitioners and policymakers. OJJDP is generally following these procedures. However, GAO found that some monitoring procedures were not followed.

GAO's review of formula grant data between January 1993 and December 1995 showed that on-site program monitoring visits were generally not done annually, as required by procedures. The Deputy Administrator said that the visits did not occur because they are expensive and time consuming. He said that OJJDP might need to revise some procedures, noting that a visit once every 2 years and some interim telephone monitoring may be more appropriate than annual visits. In addition, GAO's review of official discretionary grant files showed that,

Summary
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while almost all had plans for monitoring the work, there was little evidence in the files that monitoring had occurred. The Deputy Administrator said that OJJDP would take the necessary steps to improve its monitoring records.

Juvenile Justice: Selected Issues Relating to OJJDP's Reauthorization

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the results of our review of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). OJJDP is one of five¹ components of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP). In requesting this work, Senator Hatch and Senator Thompson asked us to cover several management and grant administration issues to assist you in your deliberations on OJJDP's reauthorization.

In accordance with their requests, my testimony covers the following topics:

- How communication and coordination have evolved between OJP and its component offices, including OJJDP. We will discuss these issues within the historic perspective of an organization that has experienced frequent change and has diffused decisionmaking authority.
- How OJJDP monitors and audits the use of juvenile justice formula grants² by states and territories.
- What new discretionary grant projects³ OJJDP has awarded over the last 3 fiscal years (fiscal years 1993 through 1995).
- How OJJDP manages its discretionary grants, including processes for planning, announcing, and awarding its discretionary grants, and how those projects are monitored. We will also discuss how the OJJDP process for outside peer review of discretionary grant applications compares to the processes of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF).
- How OJJDP communicates the results of the work it sponsors, and how those communication processes worked for five judgmentally selected discretionary grant projects.

¹The other four components are the National Institute of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

²OJJDP formula grants are funds available to states and territories to assist them in developing programs to improve their juvenile justice systems and to prevent and control delinquency. To be eligible for formula grant funds, states must apply for the program each year and meet certain requirements in treating juveniles who are detained in their facilities. In February 1996, 57 states and territories were participating in the formula grant program.

³OJJDP discretionary grants are the Office's primary funding mechanism for providing federal assistance directly to public and private juvenile justice organizations. The grants are to be awarded to applicants determined by OJJDP to be the most qualified to do work advertised in grant solicitations. Though small compared to other programs, the discretionary grant programs of OJJDP and other OJP offices collectively provide the largest block of discretionary funds available to Justice for underwriting research and demonstration projects.

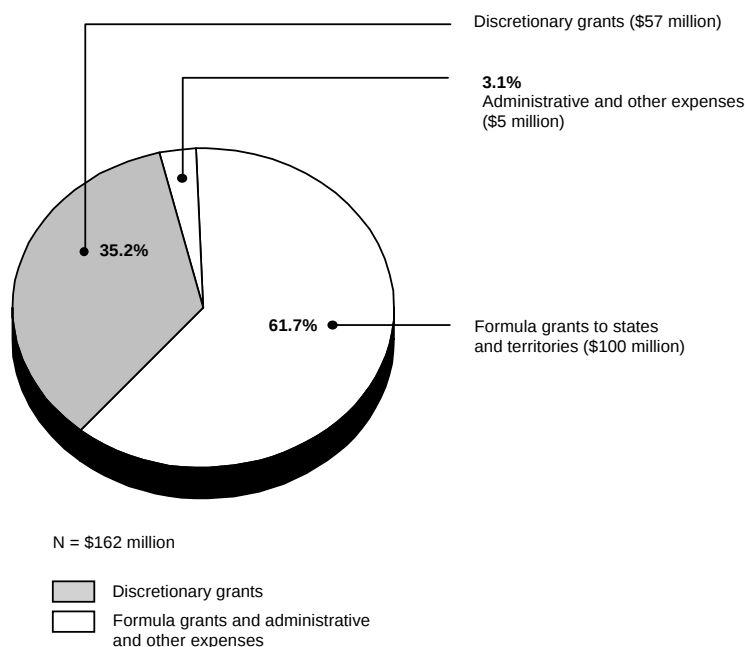
We did our work primarily at OJP and OJJDP in Washington, D.C. We also visited OJJDP contractor facilities in Rockville and Annapolis Junction, MD, and a discretionary grantee in Albany, NY. We observed an audit of the state monitoring system for formula grant use in Pennsylvania. We did our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Appendix I explains our objectives, scope, and methodology in greater detail.

Background

The goal of OJJDP is to provide national leadership in addressing the issues of juvenile delinquency and in improving juvenile justice. Formula grant funding makes up the largest portion of OJJDP's budget. In fiscal year 1995 total OJJDP appropriations were \$162 million. As shown in figure 1, \$100 million of this amount (about 62 percent) was for formula grants, and \$57 million (about 35 percent) was for discretionary grants. The remaining \$5 million (about 3 percent) covered administrative and other expenses. According to OJJDP's Administrative Officer, this included salaries for 71 authorized full-time equivalent staff positions and funds for travel and other administrative expenses.

Figure 1: OJJDP's Budget Appropriation for FY 1995

GAO OJJDP's Budget Appropriation for FY 1995



Source: GAO analysis of OJJDP data.

Historic Perspective—OJJDP Has Undergone Frequent Change

OJJDP has been a component of three umbrella offices since it was established by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDP Act).⁴ It was originally part of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) with responsibility to administer new juvenile justice grant programs. In 1979, LEAA was restructured into the Office of Justice Assistance, Research and Statistics (OJARS), and, in 1984, into OJP—with OJJDP being a component of each office. OJJDP's 22-year history

⁴Public Law 93-415, 42 U.S.C. 5601, et seq.

can be characterized by fluctuating executive branch support and funding levels.

Executive Support Fluctuated

Executive branch support for OJJDP has fluctuated over the years, while Congress continued to fund OJJDP. For example, in 1980, the administration did not seek funding for OJJDP's umbrella organization—LEAA—while retaining OJJDP. Both the 1977 reauthorization and the 1980 amendments to the JJDP Act reflected overall executive and congressional support for the law and its implementation.

Beginning in 1982, OJJDP was targeted for elimination by the executive branch. For about 10 years, the administration requested no funding for OJJDP's juvenile justice programs, but Congress restored appropriations each year.

Appropriations Levels Were Unstable

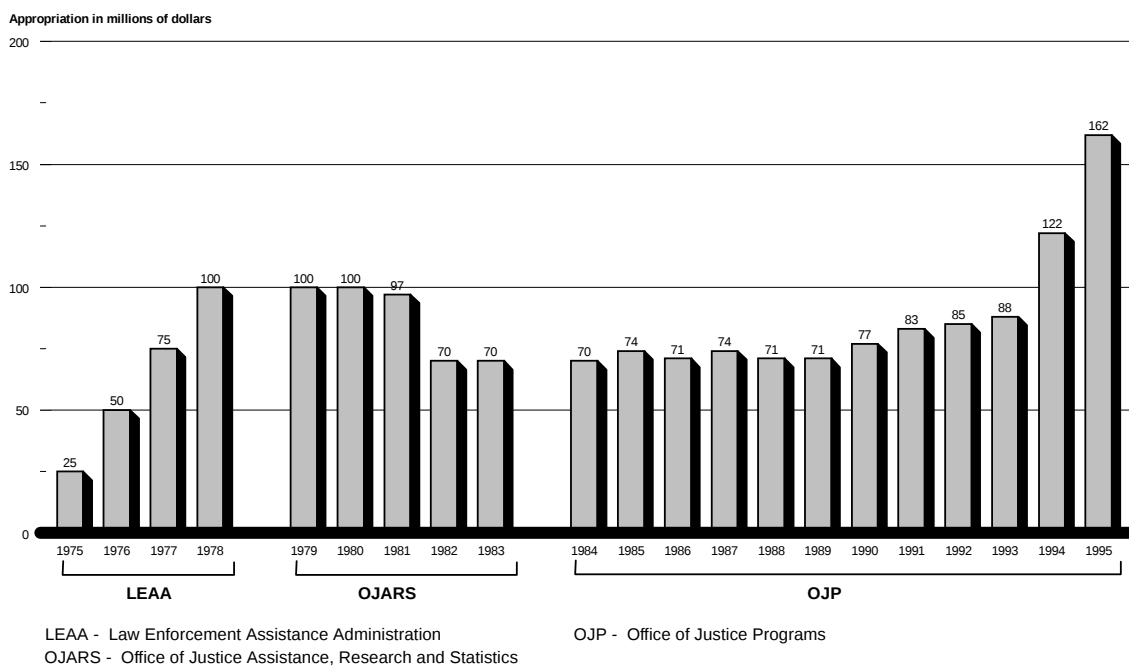
As shown in figure 2, OJJDP's funding levels dropped from about \$100 million between fiscal years 1978 and 1981 to about \$70 million in 1982. Then, between fiscal years 1982 and 1993, appropriations remained relatively flat, ranging between \$70 million and \$88 million. Appropriations levels increased rather dramatically in fiscal years 1994 and 1995. The increases were primarily for funding new initiatives authorized by 1992 amendments to the JJDP Act.

The initiatives included new formula grants for states to fund local delinquency prevention programs and state challenge grants to address priority programs identified by Congress (e.g., gender-specific services and aftercare programs for youths released from confinement). They also included new discretionary grant programs for missing and abused children, mentoring of at-risk youths to improve school performance and prevent delinquent behavior, and several programs addressing juvenile gang issues.⁵

⁵Three programs authorized by the 1992 amendments—juvenile boot camps, programs for juvenile offenders who are victims of child abuse or neglect, and a White House conference on juvenile justice—had not been funded as of April 1996.

Figure 2: OJJDP's Budget Appropriations, FYs 1975-1995

GAO OJJDP's Budget Appropriations, FYs 1975-1995



Source: GAO analysis of OJJDP data.

Communication and Coordination Between OJP and Its Components, Including OJJDP, Appeared to Have Improved Since the Early 1990s

OJJDP's history has also included conflicts over lines of authority with OJP. Justice studies and congressional hearings have attributed some of that conflict to OJP's organizational structure, as established by statute. The organizational structure gives each OJP component office, headed by a presidential appointee, independent authority to make grants and formulate budgets.

Studies by the Justice Management Division (JMD) and Justice's Office of Inspector General (IG) in 1990 and 1991 documented several conflicts over authority between OJP and its components, including OJJDP. For example, JMD found that OJP's attempts to implement agencywide comprehensive planning and budget management processes for fiscal year 1990 generated considerable controversy and objections within the components. Also, the IG documented difficulties over preparation of the fiscal year 1992 budget request. In preparing a consolidated budget request, OJP made significant changes to the funding of certain initiatives that were contained in budget submissions prepared by the components. Despite strenuous disagreement from some component heads, OJP's consolidated budget presentation was the version accepted by Justice.

Prompted in part by these reports on management problems, the Attorney General issued an order in February 1991, which assigned the Assistant Attorney General for OJP broad policymaking authority. Specifically, it gave the Assistant Attorney General authority over the contract and grant programs of the OJP components. The House Subcommittee on Government Information, Justice and Agriculture asked us to review the legality of the order.⁶

We found the Attorney General order to be contrary to statutory authority. We concluded that by assigning the Assistant Attorney General policy-setting authority and countermand authority over the OJP programs, the order exceeded the Attorney General's "general authority" over the agency heads; was contrary to components' statutory "final authority" over grant and contract matters; and conflicted with the overall statutory scheme.

According to the current Assistant Attorney General for Justice Programs, two difficulties arose from the organizational structure of OJP and its components, including OJJDP:

⁶Opinion of the Comptroller General of the United States (B-243175, Aug. 2, 1991).

- First, there are 6 presidential appointee positions in an organization of about 530 employees. She said that the number of top-level appointees can in itself become cumbersome and duplicative. Cooperation becomes overly dependent on interpersonal relationships among the heads of the components.
- Second, since each component has its own budget and grant-making authority and funds are often obligated to multiyear projects, components sometimes cannot work together on joint projects because one or another of them is not able to commit the money at any given time.

According to interviews with top OJP and OJJDP managers, communication and coordination between OJP and its components had improved since the early 1990s. The managers thought that the improvements had been the result of the current management team's interpersonal skills and commitment to cooperation.

The Assistant Attorney General for Justice Programs said that her highest priority when she took office was to achieve substantive coordination among OJP components. She said that the 1991 Attorney General order delegating broad policymaking authority to her was technically in effect, but that it was not followed. In practice, she said that OJJDP and other components exercised final control over grant awards. She also noted that components prepared their own publications without OJP review.

According to OJP's Budget Director, components, including OJJDP, developed their own annual budget requests on the basis of departmental guidance, their budget bases from the prior fiscal year, and Attorney General priorities. She said that the Assistant Attorney General would not change an item in a component's budget request unless the component concurred. However, OJP budget officials would let component officials know if they believed an item would not withstand Department review.

The Assistant Attorney General and the OJJDP Administrator said that they believed communication and coordination between OJP and its component offices had improved. They cited several examples of progress made on these issues:

- In fiscal year 1995, OJP published a consolidated volume of the program plans for OJJDP and three other components.⁷ It was the first time since fiscal year 1990 that a consolidated program plan had been issued.

⁷The Bureau of Justice Statistics' plan was not included.

- The OJP management team held a series of retreats in 1995 to establish goals, priorities, and strategies, and the team planned to have similar retreats for longer-term strategic planning during 1996.
- More joint projects and working groups were established to deal with issues that cross-cut more than one component.

The Assistant Attorney General said that progress made in interagency coordination should be institutionalized. However, in the absence of statutory changes in OJP's organizational structure, she was uncertain as to whether the relationships and progress achieved would be institutionalized, or whether they were the result of solid working relationships built by one management team that might not be transferable to another team.

OJJDP's Monitoring of Formula Grants Was Not as Frequent as Procedures Required, but Audits Were Generally Done on Time

To participate in the formula grant program, states and territories apply for funding annually and are required to submit 3-year comprehensive plans on how the formula funds are to be used to meet their juvenile justice and delinquency prevention needs. According to the Handbook of Policies and Procedures for the Administration of OJP Grants, formula grants made to states and territories are to be monitored through annual visits to determine whether states are following the plans they submitted for use of their formula grant funds.

OJJDP guidance also requires audits of each formula grant program every 5 years. The audits are to determine whether states' monitoring systems were reporting complete and accurate information on compliance with requirements that they must meet to be eligible for formula grants. Four key requirements for continued eligibility are that states develop and adhere to policies, practices, and laws which ensure that (1) juvenile status offenders (e.g., run-aways and truants) are not detained in secure detention or correctional facilities; (2) juveniles are not detained or confined in any institution where they have contact with adult detainees; (3) juveniles are not detained or confined in adult jails or lockups; and (4) efforts are made to reduce the disproportionate confinement of minority youth where it exists.

Our review of OJJDP data showed that on-site program monitoring visits were generally not done on an annual basis, as required by OJP procedures. The data showed that audits had generally been done for each participating state and territory within the 5-year period specified by OJJDP guidance.

Monitoring Visits

Monitoring visits are to determine whether states were doing activities that they specified in their state plans with the formula grant funds that they received. According to OJJDP officials, monitoring visits are generally no longer than 3 days in duration, they follow a format prescribed in a monitoring handbook, and written reports of visits are generally prepared.

Our review of OJJDP monitoring data showed that on-site program monitoring visits were generally not done on an annual basis, as required by OJP procedures. From January 1993 through December 1995, a total of 29 on-site visits were made. If each participating state and territory had been monitored annually during that period, 171 monitoring visits should have been completed. Officials noted that they also met with state formula grant program managers at conferences, state advisory group meetings, and OJJDP-sponsored workshops and discussed their programs. We do not think meetings with state officials at other functions should be considered as monitoring visits, where checks are to be made of the states' adherence to their plans.

The OJJDP Deputy Administrator said that monitoring visits did not occur on an annual basis because they are expensive, particularly in territories, and they are time consuming to do. In response to our review, he said that OJJDP officials would consider possible revisions of monitoring procedures, noting that a visit once every 2 years and some interim monitoring by telephone may be more appropriate than annual visits to 57 states and territories. He also said that follow-up to ensure compliance with any new procedures implemented would occur.

Audits

According to officials, audits typically involved about a week of fieldwork culminating in an exit conference and written report and are to follow a plan detailed in OJP guidelines. The audits are to include reviews of written monitoring procedures that state officials are to follow, interviews with staff responsible for monitoring, and inspections to determine whether adequate steps had been taken to separate juveniles from adults housed in the same facilities. In addition, audits are to include verification of compliance data and checks of facilities' admission and release records to ensure that the states reported accurate information to OJJDP.

On the basis of our review of OJJDP data, we found that audits had been done for most participating states and territories within the 5-year period specified by procedures. Of 57 states and territories participating in the program as of February 1996, 44 (77 percent) had either been audited

between January 1991 and March 1996, or audits were not required because the state had a period of nonparticipation in the program. Arrangements were being made to complete at least three additional audits in 1996. According to the Deputy Administrator, efforts will continue to achieve full compliance with the 5-year audit requirements.

OJJDP Awarded 162 New Discretionary Grants for Fiscal Years 1993 Through 1995

For fiscal years 1993 through 1995, OJJDP data showed that it awarded 162 new discretionary grants. Funded projects covered a variety of program areas. They were for (1) research on juvenile justice issues; (2) demonstration projects testing new approaches to delinquency prevention, treatment, and intervention; (3) training and technical assistance to juvenile justice practitioners; or (4) a mix of these activities.

Forty-one of the 162 awards provided funds to grantees at demonstration sites nationwide to develop juvenile mentoring programs. The program was designed to match adults in one-to-one relationships with young people who were having difficulty in school. The goals were to improve student participants' academic performance, reduce school drop-out rates, and prevent delinquent behavior. Grantees included hospitals, Boys and Girls Club chapters, and Big Brother and Big Sister chapters. Funding was for July 1995 through June 1998, with 4,000 young people in 25 states expected to participate.

Other discretionary grant awards went to colleges and universities; state and local government offices, including public school systems and courts; and nonprofit organizations. All regions of the nation were represented.

Project periods for the 162 awards made in the 3-year period ranged from about 1 year to about 9 years, with the average period running about 2 years. The highest individual award amount was about \$3.1 million for a 3-year project providing services at a national center for missing and exploited children in Arlington, VA. The services included a toll-free hotline, case management and analysis, publication development, and photo distribution and age progression for missing children. The smallest award amount was \$31,448 for an 18-month project to research, publish, and disseminate a law enforcement manual containing federal and state laws relating to missing children. The grant was also to fund the development of a training program and 13 training sessions to provide information on the basis of the research. We did not calculate an average award amount because some of the new grants awarded during the period

of our review were incomplete and were scheduled to have other funds awarded in future fiscal years.

In a May 1996 correspondence,⁸ we provided the Subcommittee with a list of all of the discretionary grants awarded during the 3 fiscal years by program category, including descriptions of each grant and information on the grantee, project period, and funds awarded as of March 1996. In instances where more than one grant was awarded for the same project over the period of our review, we combined award amounts and project descriptions. Appendix II provides examples of discretionary grants for research, demonstration projects, and training and technical assistance.

OJJDP's Process for Implementing Its Discretionary Grant Program

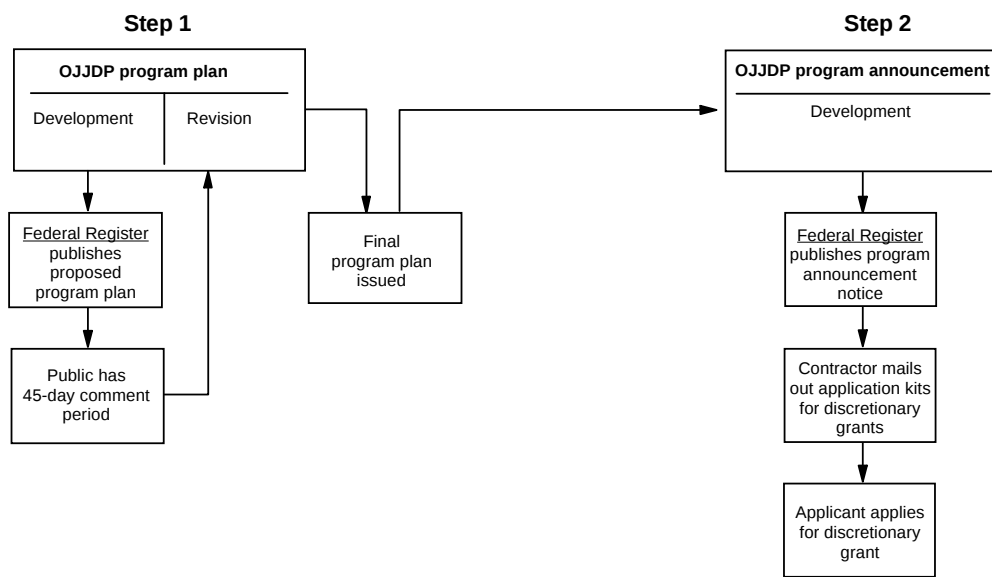
OJJDP manages its discretionary grants by setting goals and priorities for the programs and publicizing available grant programs. It then obtains assistance from peer review panels to evaluate grant applications, makes final grant award decisions, and monitors the work of the grantees. According to OJJDP officials, appropriations delays slowed the process of soliciting applications for discretionary grants this fiscal year.

As shown in figure 3, the key parts of OJJDP's process for planning and announcing discretionary grants are issuance of a program plan; issuance of discretionary program announcements; and distribution of application kits. As shown in figure 4, the key parts of the grant application and review process include initial screening of applications by the OJJDP program manager, peer review of applications, and final selection of applications for funding by the OJJDP administrator.

⁸OJJDP Discretionary Grant Programs (GAO/GGD-96-111R, May 7, 1996).

Figure 3: OJJDP's Process for Planning and Announcing Grant Programs

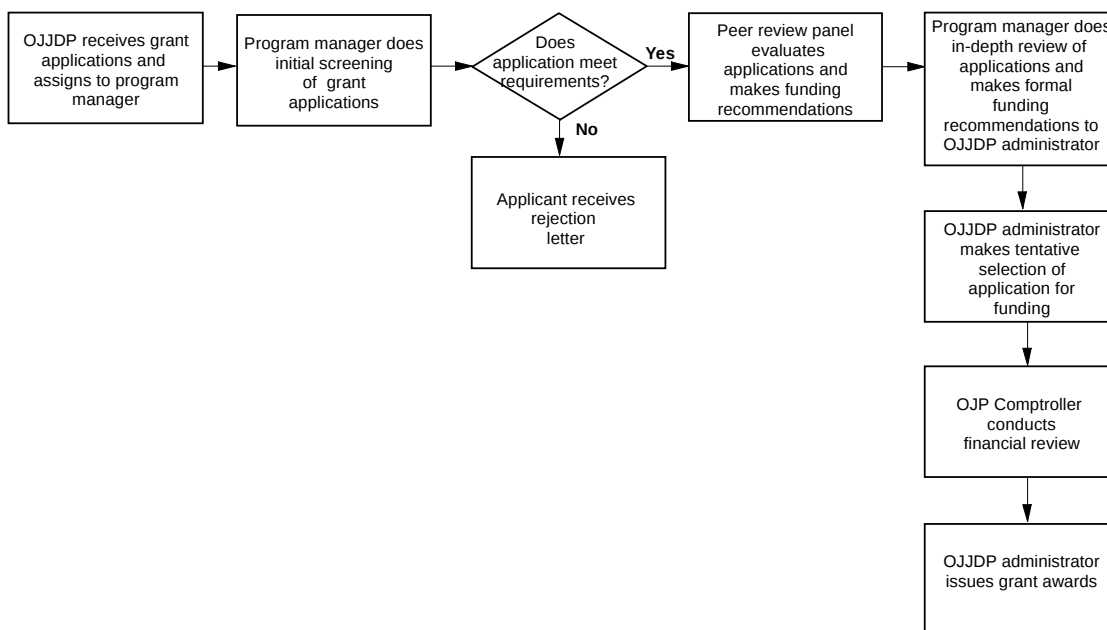
GAO OJJDP's Process for Planning and Announcing Grant Programs



Source: GAO analysis of OJJDP documents and interviews with OJJDP staff.

Figure 4: Overview of OJJDP Grant Application and Review Process

GAO Overview of OJJDP Grant Application and Review Process



Source: GAO analysis of OJJDP documents and interviews with OJJDP staff.

Program Plan Is to Describe Goals and Priorities

The program plan is to describe OJJDP's goals and priorities for the fiscal year and its discretionary grant programs. OJJDP is required by law to publish a proposed program plan in the Federal Register. After a 45-day comment period and before December 31 of each fiscal year, OJJDP is to publish a final plan.

According to an official, the OJJDP program plan was generally drafted by the administrator and senior managers and was based on congressional

and departmental priorities, their knowledge and experience, and input during the course of the year from a variety of sources. As described in the Federal Register, these sources of input included program reviews by OJJDP staff and comments from practitioners in the field, officials from Justice and OJP components, and other federal agencies. The final program plans are also to take into consideration comments received during the 45-day public comment period on the proposed plan.

**Program Announcements
and Application Kits Are to
Solicit Applicants for
Programs**

Following publication of the final program plan, OJJDP is to publish in the Federal Register a notice of competitive discretionary grant programs and to announce the availability of an application kit. The notice is to include the availability of funds, criteria for selection of applicants, procedures applicable to the submission and review of applications for assistance, and information on how to obtain an application kit.

Subsequent to issuance of final program announcements, an OJJDP official said that application kits are to be mailed to interested parties through its contractor-operated Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse. According to the official, about 10,000 copies of the application kit were printed for fiscal year 1995, and about the same number are expected to be printed in fiscal year 1996.

**Peer Review Panels Are to
Help Determine Which
Applications Are Funded**

Upon receipt of discretionary grant applications, the OJJDP program manager is to perform an initial review on each of them, using an application review checklist. The objective of this initial review is to determine whether applications are complete and eligible for federal funding.

By statute, OJJDP is to have a formal peer review process for its discretionary grant programs. The statute also required that, in establishing its peer review process, OJJDP consult with the directors of the National Institute of Mental Health, a part of NIH, and NSF and submit their final peer review plan to those officials for formal comment.

OJJDP's peer review process is to be advisory—to supplement and assist the consideration of applications by OJJDP. However, an official noted that, in practice, results of the peer review panels' consideration of applications were almost always accepted by OJJDP.

OJJDP contracted out the administrative arrangements (e.g., arranging panels and notifying reviewers) for the peer review of its discretionary grant applications. The contractor maintained a list of qualified consultants from which peer reviewers were selected by OJJDP. In December 1995, the list contained more than 600 names. Peer reviewers were recommended for projects by the OJJDP grant program manager overseeing the project. The OJJDP administrator also had the option of selecting reviewers or asking the grant manager for additional names. Once the selection was made by OJJDP, the contractor was to make arrangements with individuals selected to do the reviews of the projects. According to an OJJDP official, consultants performing peer reviews were reimbursed at a flat rate of \$150 a day, as established by the Administrator.

OJJDP guidance required that the program manager use the following criteria to help achieve balance on the peer review panel:

- Each reviewer should have expertise in or complementary to the subject area under review.
- Where possible, the peer review panel should be composed of a mix of researchers, practitioners, and academicians.
- Panel members should be drawn from as wide a geographic area as practical.
- Special attention should be paid to obtaining qualified representation from women and minority groups.

**Competition, Peer Review
Occurred for Almost All
Discretionary Grants
Awarded That We
Reviewed in Fiscal Years
1993 Through 1995**

We reviewed files for 81 of 162 new discretionary grants awarded in fiscal years 1993 through 1995. All but two of the grants we reviewed were awarded competitively.⁹ In 75 of the 81 instances, 3 or more proposals were peer reviewed.

Peer reviewers reviewed and scored proposals in six categories: (1) conceptualization of the problem; (2) goals and objectives (i.e., are they program specific, clearly defined, and easily measurable); (3) project design; (4) implementation; (5) organizational capability; and (6) budget.

Peer review panels were composed of three panelists in all of the cases we reviewed. In instances in which a large number of proposals were submitted, peer review followed a two-step process. First, reviewers did

⁹In one of the instances in which a grant was awarded noncompetitively, the record stated that expertise to do the project was available from only one source. In the other instance, a grantee was awarded a noncompetitive continuation grant.

evaluations by mail. Second, reviewers convened as a panel for discussions and scoring of proposals.

Biographical data for 60 peer reviewers on panels for the grants that we reviewed showed that they were professionals in the criminal justice field representing geographic regions nationwide. They included academicians; a judge; researchers; and practitioners, such as juvenile justice project directors and program administrators. Twenty-eight percent of the peer reviewers in our sample were minorities, and 47 percent were women.

Final Decisions to Award Discretionary Grants

After completion of the peer review panels, OJJDP is to do a second internal review of the applications. It is to consider review comments from peer reviewers and other program offices. The OJJDP manager of the discretionary grant program is to make formal recommendations concerning applications to receive funding in a memorandum to the administrator, and the administrator is to make tentative grant selections. The OJP Comptroller is to do a financial review of these applications to determine whether the applicant has the necessary resources and integrity to account for and administer federal funds properly, and whether budget and cost data in the application were allowable, effective, and reasonable. Final awards are to be made by the OJJDP administrator.

Appropriations Delays Have Slowed Discretionary Grant Solicitations and Project Funding in Fiscal Year 1996

According to an OJJDP official, delays in enactment of annual appropriations measures have resulted in difficulties in publishing a program plan according to established time frames. If significant delays occur, it becomes difficult to complete the steps in the grant application, review, and award process before the end of the fiscal year. OJJDP's program plan for fiscal year 1996 was published in the Federal Register on February 20, several months later than the official said is the normal time frame for publication. Because OJJDP was operating under a continuing resolution, which is a short-term spending measure, funding amounts were not included in the plan. In comparison, the proposed comprehensive plan for fiscal year 1995 was published on December 30, 1994, with preliminary funding amounts for each program included.

According to an OJJDP official, appropriations delays also slowed funding for some multiyear discretionary grant projects during the first 5 months of fiscal year 1996. When appropriations are authorized in the beginning of a fiscal year, continuation funds are awarded once for the full fiscal year. In the first 5 months of fiscal year 1996, some partial awards were made

for ongoing projects that had exhausted funds needed to continue operating. The official noted that funding grants in this manner results in additional paperwork. The fiscal year 1996 appropriation was enacted on April 26, 1996. The appropriation level, \$162 million, was about the same as the fiscal year 1995 level.

**Comparison of OJJDP Peer
Review to Peer Reviews by
NIH and NSF**

We compared the peer review processes of NIH and NSF to those of OJJDP to note similarities and differences among these agencies. We found the following similarities among peer review processes at OJJDP, NIH, and NSF:

- the decisions of the peer reviewers were advisory;
- written criteria for selecting reviewers promoted balanced review selection in terms of race, gender, and region; and
- reviewers evaluated and scored applications on the basis of written criteria.

Key differences we found among peer review processes at the three agencies were in the size and structure of peer review panels and in the methods of appointing peer reviewers. NIH peer reviewers served on panels for up to 4 years. Officials said that this approach allowed for the selection of top experts as panelists. In contrast, NSF and OJJDP registered large numbers of peer reviewers and called upon each infrequently to serve as reviewers. According to an OJJDP official and a researcher, this approach allowed for a broad base of opinions and limited the possibility of reviewers developing biases toward particular potential grantees.

NIH used a dual peer review system. The initial level of review was to evaluate the scientific and technical merit of applications. It involved panels of experts selected according to scientific disciplines or research areas. Initial review groups were composed of about 16 members appointed for 4-year terms. The second level of review was to evaluate applications again on scientific merit and on relevance to the program and priorities. Second-tier reviewers were also appointed for 4-year terms and included scientists and government policy personnel. These panels generally met about three times a year. A typical second-tier panel at NIH included 12 to 15 panelists.

According to officials, NSF used three methods of external peer reviews: review by mail; review by panel; and a combination of mail and panel review. In all types of panel reviews, reviewers were asked to address the merits of ideas, the capacity of the research leaders and teams to do the

work, and the likelihood of wide use of potential research results. About 50,000 reviewers were used annually. They were selected from a list of about 216,000 potential reviewers. Panels were typically composed of 8 to 12 members. Mail reviews involved about 10 reviewers.

Official Grant Files Reviewed Generally Contained Monitoring Plans but Little Evidence That Monitoring Occurred

According to OJP policy, information on discretionary grant monitoring and related activities is to be maintained in official grant files. Of the 131 new discretionary grants awarded for fiscal years 1993 through 1995 that we reviewed, files for 129 grants contained plans by program managers for monitoring the work. Monitoring plans included such activities by the grant manager as making quarterly telephone calls or on-site visits to grantees and reviewing interim and final products. In addition, grantees were usually expected to submit quarterly program and financial progress reports for review by program managers.

We found little evidence in the files we reviewed that monitoring had occurred as planned. None of the files had documentation of telephone contacts, site visits, or product reviews. No quarterly program and financial reports were included in 11 of the 78 files for which projects had been ongoing for at least 2 quarters at the time of our review, and 1 or more reports were missing from another 61 files. Only 6 of the 78 files had program and financial reports for all quarters of work completed.

The OJJDP Deputy Administrator said that quarterly program and financial reports were to be submitted by grantees to remain eligible for funding, and he thought that the missing reports had been submitted but had not been filed in official grant files as they should have been. He also noted that reports of monitoring visits should have been placed in grant files. He said that written records of routine monitoring by telephone were not required. The Deputy Administrator noted that OJJDP discretionary grant program managers are responsible for overall program management, not just monitoring, and that the large workload may result in the lack of monitoring records. As a result of our review of monitoring data, he said that OJJDP would take the necessary steps to improve monitoring records.

How OJJDP Communicated Discretionary Grant Results

OJJDP and other OJP components participate in a contract negotiated by the National Institute of Justice with Aspen Systems, Inc., to handle several aspects of communicating the results of the work that it sponsors. According to the Contract Coordinator, Aspen Systems has done this work for about 18 years under a competitive procurement contract that is rebid

every 3 to 4 years. Each OJP component participating in the contract funds a share of the annual contract award amount of about \$7 million.

Tasks performed by the contractor for OJJDP include providing publications support (e.g., editing services), acquiring documents, and operating information booths at conferences. In addition, the contractor operates a toll-free telephone line and an Internet mailbox to assist with information requests; manages mailing lists; and assembles, collates, distributes, and stores documents.

In our review to determine how research results were communicated, we reviewed the following five grants, which were completed in fiscal year 1995: (1) Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Juvenile Delinquency—a longitudinal research study conducted in three states; (2) Funding Support for Specific Program Development for a State Clearinghouse for Missing Children—a training and technical assistance grant; (3) County-wide Youth Gang Prevention Project—Malheur County—a demonstration project; (4) National Juvenile Hate Crime Study—a research grant; and (5) American Bar Association Symposium on International Child Abduction—a training and technical assistance grant.

Overall, we found that these OJJDP grants resulted in a variety of types of final products, including research summaries, fact sheets, technical reports and technical appendixes, reference manuals, training curricula, reports and executive summaries, comprehensive resource manuals, and symposiums. These products are available to interested parties through the Electronic Bulletin Board System, the Internet, DIALOG, CD-ROM, and the contractor document database and library collection.

According to contractor data, requesters for these grant final products were affiliated with a wide range of organizations including: OJJDP, the Office for Victims of Crime, OJP, other Department of Justice agencies, Congress, other federal agencies, state and local planners, police departments, youth services organizations, corrections offices, courts, criminal justice and juvenile justice commissions and professional associations, other professional associations, legislatures, U.S. military departments, international users, researcher organizations, faculties/students, community organizations, medias/publishers, foundations, public interest groups, the general public, corporations, and consultants.

Statement
Juvenile Justice: Selected Issues Relating to
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Appendix III shows detailed communication information for each OJJDP grant included in our sample.

This concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

As agreed with the Committee and Subcommittee, our objective was to provide the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Youth Violence with descriptive information on the operations of OJJDP. We addressed the following issues:

- What communication and coordination takes place between OJP and its component offices, including OJJDP, within the historic perspective of an organization that has experienced frequent change and has diffused decisionmaking authority?
- How does OJJDP monitor and audit the use of juvenile justice formula grant funds by states and territories?
- What new discretionary grants did OJJDP award during fiscal years 1993 through 1995? What were the program categories, titles of grants, grantees, project descriptions, proposed project periods, and dollars awarded for these grants as of March 1996?
- How does OJJDP manage its discretionary grants, including processes for planning, announcing, and awarding the grants and for monitoring grantees' performance?
- How does OJJDP communicate the results of the work it sponsors?

We also compared OJJDP's processes for peer review of grant applications with the processes used by NIH and NSF.

To determine the level of communication and coordination that exists between OJP and component offices, including OJJDP, we interviewed the Assistant Attorney General for OJP and the OJJDP Administrator. We also reviewed documentation of management retreats, consolidated program plans, and other examples of efforts by OJP and its components, including OJJDP, to communicate and coordinate. We relied on prior reports issued by GAO and Justice's Office of Inspector General and Justice Management Division for an historic perspective on this issue.

To determine how OJJDP monitors and audits the use of juvenile justice formula grant funds by participating states and territories, we reviewed written procedures for monitoring visits and audits, and we interviewed OJJDP officials and program managers. To determine whether monitoring visits and audits were occurring within established time periods, we examined documentation of the dates these actions were last completed in each participating state and territory. We also observed a 4-day audit of Pennsylvania's monitoring system for formula grant use during the week of March 4, 1996. We did not evaluate the quality or completeness of the monitoring visits and audits that were done.

To determine what new discretionary grants OJJDP had awarded during fiscal years 1993 through 1995, we obtained a list of the grants from OJJDP. Using a data collection instrument, we then collected information from official grant files for 131 of the 162 discretionary grants awarded during this period. Forty-one awards were made for juvenile mentoring demonstration programs at various locations nationwide. We reviewed a random sample of 10 of them. We reviewed all 121 of the other discretionary awards made over the 3-year period. This information is summarized in the testimony. A complete list of the awards made, including program and project descriptions, grant titles, grantees, proposed project periods, and dollars awarded as of March 1996, was provided to the Subcommittee in a May correspondence.¹ In instances where more than one grant was awarded for the same project over the period of our review, we combined award amounts and project descriptions.

To determine how OJJDP managed its discretionary grants program, we interviewed program officials and reviewed procedural manuals, Federal Register announcements, and grant application kits. We also reviewed contractor files at Aspen Systems, Inc., in Rockville, MD, which documented peer reviews of selected grant applications. We reviewed documentation on 81 of the 162 new grants awarded during fiscal years 1993 through 1995. The 81 files we reviewed were judgmentally selected on the basis of their availability. They included a mix of grants awarded in each of the 3 years. We also reviewed biographical data on 60 peer reviewers who served on the panels that made these grant awards. To compare OJJDP's peer review process with processes used by NIH and NSF, we interviewed officials of these organizations and reviewed their written procedures. We did not verify the processes used at NIH and NSF.

For the portion of OJJDP's management of discretionary grants covering the monitoring of projects selected for award, we reviewed its written procedures. As part of our review of 131 new grants awarded during fiscal years 1993 through 1995, we also documented monitoring plans and records of monitoring that had occurred. We did not evaluate the quality of monitoring done. We observed a monitoring visit to grantees at the State University of New York at Albany, NY, in February 1996 to discuss progress on a longitudinal study of the causes and correlates of delinquency.

¹GAO/GGD-96-111R.

To determine how OJJDP communicated the results of discretionary grant projects, we interviewed program officials. We visited contractor facilities at Aspen Systems, Inc., in Rockville and Annapolis Junction, MD. These facilities handled communications functions for OJJDP, including compiling mailing lists; answering telephone requests for information; and distributing and storing publications.

We also reviewed a judgmental sample of four completed discretionary projects and one ongoing longitudinal study to determine what products had resulted from the work, how the results were communicated, and to how many and what types of requesters (i.e., policymakers, practitioners, students, etc.) they were distributed. These projects were selected to obtain a variety of types of grants and grant amounts and a diversity of geographic regions.

Our work was done between November 1995 and April 1996 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

On April 19, 1996, we obtained oral comments from the Deputy Administrator and Administrative Officer of OJJDP on this testimony. These agency officials generally agreed with the information presented in this testimony and provided comments that we incorporated as appropriate.

Examples of Various Types of OJJDP Discretionary Grants

The following are examples of various types of OJJDP discretionary grants. For summary information on all 162 discretionary grants awarded during fiscal years 1993 through 1995, see our May correspondence (GAO/GGD-96-111R, May 7, 1996).

The following is an example of a research grant:

- A program of research on the causes of delinquency. This program has been ongoing at three universities since 1986 with funding from OJJDP, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the NSF. The studies have tracked at-risk youths and their parents through interviews and analysis of data, including school and police records. The young people, who lived in Rochester, NY; Denver, CO; and Pittsburgh, PA, were 7 to 15 years old when they began participating in the project. In the 1995-96 time period, they were about 17 to 25 years old. According to a researcher involved with the project since its inception, it is the most extensive research done on at-risk youths. The project is currently incorporating the experiences of three generations of participating families because some of the youths had become parents.

The research assisted in development of a comprehensive strategy by OJJDP for prevention and intervention in the careers of serious, violent, and chronic offenders. The strategy included prevention services for at-risk youths and their families and graduated sanctions for offenders.

An example of a grant for a demonstration project follows:

- Grants demonstrating law-related education (LRE) programs. LRE is a curriculum for elementary and secondary school students that teaches commitment to good citizenship and skills such as alternative dispute resolution, peer mediation, and conflict resolution. In 1990, OJJDP began funding LRE programs for at-risk youths. Demonstration projects funded in the review period included those for a bilingual program; a course for youths leaving correctional facilities to return to high-risk environments; and 1-week LRE summer camp sessions for at-risk middle school youths.

The following is an example of a grant to provide training and technical assistance:

- An award to the California Department of Justice to provide training to users of an on-line missing and unidentified persons system. In addition to giving 13 training sessions, project results were to include the research,

Appendix II
Examples of Various Types of OJJDP
Discretionary Grants

publication, and dissemination of a law enforcement manual containing federal and state laws relating to missing children.

Communication of Research Results for Four Projects

Grant title	Product type	Requestor type	Total number of products requested
Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Juvenile Delinquency	Research summary	State and local legislators, policymakers, youth service providers, and juvenile justice researchers	21,410
	Fact sheet	State and local legislators, policymakers, youth service providers, and juvenile justice researchers	4,170
	Technical report	State and local legislators, policymakers, youth service providers, and juvenile justice researchers	112
Funding Support for Specific Program Development for State Clearinghouse for Missing Children	Reference manual and training curriculum	Unknown ^a	Unknown ^a
National Juvenile Hate Crime Study	Fact sheet	State and local legislators, policymakers, law enforcement officials, and victim service providers	388
	Executive summary and full report	Planned distribution, spring 1996	N/A
American Bar Association Symposium on International Child Abduction	Compendium	State and local organizations, professional associations, educators, and students	427
	Promotional flyer	Variety of related interest groups	28,568

Legend

N/A = Not applicable

^aThe reports have been borrowed from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service library and copied; therefore, the number cannot be quantified.

Source: GAO analysis of OJJDP data.

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