

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-806T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Government Operations, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

OJP is DOJ's largest grant-making agency, with multiple bureaus and offices and a fiscal year 2016 enacted discretionary budget of about \$1.8 billion. OJP provides grants that support victims' assistance, policing, and a range of other activities. GAO's prior work on DOJ and OJP grants management has identified a number of approaches that could enhance the effectiveness, oversight, and accountability of grant administration practices. These include improving tracking and evaluating performance, streamlining grants management processes; and strengthening internal controls.

This testimony highlights DOJ's efforts to address prior recommendations from three GAO reports related to: (1) DOJ's overall grant administration practices, (2) OJP's management of the body armor program, and (3) OJP's management of the Victims of Child Abuse Act grant program. These reports were issued from 2012 through 2015. To prepare these reports, GAO analyzed key DOJ documents, interviewed DOJ officials, and reviewed grantee files. GAO also obtained selected recommendation status updates from DOJ through early July 2016. For recommendation updates, GAO reviewed DOJ documentation and held discussions with agency officials.

## What GAO Recommends

In prior reports, GAO made 17 recommendations to DOJ to enhance department-wide and OJP-specific grant administration. DOJ has implemented 13 of them, and is taking steps to address the remaining 4 recommendations.

View [GAO-16-806T](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or [goodwin@gao.gov](mailto:goodwin@gao.gov).

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## DOJ GRANTS MANAGEMENT

# Justice Has Made Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations

## What GAO Found

In three reports issued from 2012 through 2015, GAO made 17 recommendations to the Department of Justice (DOJ) related to improving grants management. Specifically, these recommendations related to enhancing the department's overall grant administration practices, as well as enhancing the management of two specific grant programs that DOJ's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) administers: the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) program for law enforcement body armor, and the Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCA) program for children's advocacy centers. As of early July 2016, DOJ and OJP have implemented 13 of these recommendations, and they have actions underway to address the rest.

**DOJ's Overall Grant Administration Practices.** In July 2012, GAO found that DOJ had not assessed its grant programs department-wide to identify overlap—which occurs when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to achieve them, or target similar beneficiaries. GAO also found that DOJ did not routinely coordinate grant awards to avoid unnecessary duplication, which occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries without being knowledgeable about each other's efforts. Further, GAO reported that DOJ could take steps to better assess the results of all the grant programs it administers. As result, GAO made 8 recommendations to DOJ to enhance its overall grant administration practices. DOJ has implemented 7 as of early July 2016, and is making progress on the final recommendation related to codifying new policies and procedures.

**OJP's Management of the BVP program.** In February 2012, GAO found that OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance could enhance grant management controls and better ensure consistency in BVP grant program requirements by improving grantee accountability in the use of funds for body armor purchases, reducing the risk of grantee noncompliance with program requirements, and ensuring consistency across its efforts to promote law enforcement officer safety. As a result, GAO made 5 recommendations to OJP. OJP has implemented all 5.

**OJP's Management of the VOCA program.** In April 2015, GAO found that OJP's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) had several administrative review and approval processes in place that contributed to delays in grantees' ability to begin spending their award funds. For example, for the 28 VOCA grants awarded from fiscal years 2010 through 2013, grantees had expended less than 20 percent, on average, of each grant they received during the original 12-month project period. In particular, GAO found that OJJDP's processes for reviewing grantees' budgets and conference planning requests were contributing to delays in grantees' ability to begin spending their funds. GAO also found that OJJDP did not have complete data to assess VOCA grantees' performance against the measures it had established because the tools it used to collect this information did not align to the measures themselves. As a result, GAO made 4 recommendations to OJP. OJP has implemented 1 as of early July 2016, and is making progress on the 3 recommendations related to examining its administrative processes and project period length and establishing and enforcing clear requirements.