

GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-302](#), a report to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

OJJDP administers grant programs to improve positive outcomes for juveniles in the justice system. From fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2019, OJJDP awarded 927 grants totaling nearly \$874 million. In December 2019, GAO reported that OJP uses tools, including the GAT, which provide insight on fraud risks for OJJDP grants. The GAT assigns quarterly risk scores to all grants based on 38 risk criteria. Based on the total score, OJP assigns a priority level of low, medium or high. The monitoring priority level, as well as other factors, then contributes to monitoring decisions.

The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 included a provision for GAO to review internal controls intended to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse of OJJDP grant funds.

This report examines the extent to which OJP accurately assigns monitoring priority levels for OJJDP grants through the GAT. GAO reviewed GAT scores for 1,336 OJJDP grants active from October 2017 through September 2019 to identify any scoring inconsistencies with OJP guidance or external data sources for seven GAT risk criteria. GAO then selected a non-generalizable sample of 20 grants for additional review of monitoring results, and interviewed OJP officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations, including that OJP document the GAT scoring and quality assurance processes developed for the JustGrants system. DOJ concurred with these recommendations.

View [GAO-21-302](#). For more information, contact Rebecca Shea at (202) 512-6722, shear@gao.gov; or Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or goodwing@gao.gov.

March 2021

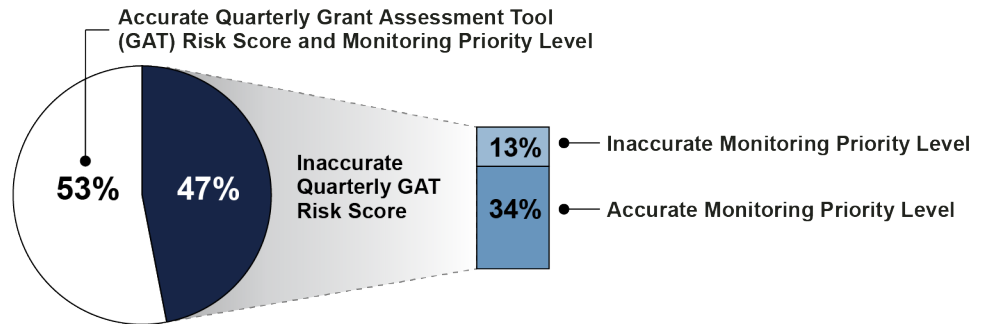
JUVENILE JUSTICE GRANTS

The Office of Justice Programs Could Improve the Quality of a Key Fraud Control

What GAO Found

The Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs (OJP) assigned inaccurate monitoring priority levels for some Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) grants from fiscal year 2017 through 2019 through its Grant Assessment Tool (GAT). This may have affected whether these grants were selected for in-depth programmatic or financial monitoring—a primary fraud risk control. Specifically, GAO's analysis of 7 of the 38 GAT risk criteria scores determined that for the 1,336 active OJJDP grants, scoring discrepancies or errors caused the total risk score to be incorrect for 47 percent of all quarterly GAT risk scores (4,207 of 9,029). After correcting the identified scoring discrepancies and errors, GAO recalculated the total risk scores and found that OJP assigned inaccurate monitoring priority levels for approximately 13 percent (1,151 of 9,029) of the quarterly GAT risk scores. (See figure).

Accuracy of Quarterly GAT Risk Scores and Monitoring Priority Levels for OJJDP Grants for Fiscal Years 2017-2019



Source: GAO analysis of OJP information. | GAO-21-302

OJP officials identified several potential explanations for the scoring discrepancies and errors, including manual score changes that had not been documented and problems with the technical processes used to transfer data from the Grants Management System into the GAT. OJP officials did not identify these issues until GAO's review, in part because GAT scoring and quality assurance processes had not been documented in policy or standard operating procedures. In October 2020, OJP began using a new system to manage the grant-making process called JustGrants. As a result, OJP has an opportunity to ensure that the issues leading to incorrect GAT risk scores are not replicated in the new system. As part of the implementation of JustGrants, OJP has made or plans to make adjustments to address the issues GAO identified. However, OJP has not yet documented the revised GAT scoring and quality assurance processes, though officials stated they plan to do so. By documenting the GAT scoring and quality assurance processes developed for the JustGrants system, OJP can help ensure that quarterly GAT risk scores are accurately assigned and monitoring priority levels correctly represent the grant's risk level, thereby improving the effectiveness of OJP's fraud risk management efforts.