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Juvenile Justice Funding Trends

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Juvenile Justice Funding Trends

Although juvenile justice is generally the purview of the states, the federal government has played a role through the administration of grant programs. Congress has influenced states' juvenile justice systems by authorizing and funding grant programs administered by the Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP; P.L. 93-415), enacted in 1974, was the first comprehensive juvenile justice legislation passed by Congress. The JJDP authorized a series of grant programs designed to support state juvenile justice systems and prevent juvenile delinquency. Since its enactment, the JJDP has undergone several key amendments, including a significant reorganization in 2002 (by the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act; P.L. 107-273). Its grant programs were most recently amended and reauthorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-385).

Funding for programs authorized by the JJDP, as well as for other non-JJDP grant programs administered by OJJDP, is provided through the Juvenile Justice Programs account in the annual Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations act. After the restructuring of juvenile justice grant programs in 2002, total funding for these programs began to decline. This decline generally continued through FY2007, after which funding for these programs started to increase. For FY2010, Congress provided \$424 million for juvenile justice programs—the largest appropriation since FY2003. Juvenile justice funding then generally declined again from FY2010 through FY2017. After appropriating a low of \$247 million for juvenile justice programs in FY2017, Congress increased juvenile justice funding annually from FY2018 through FY2023—the largest appropriation since FY2010—before decreasing it for FY2024. Most recently, the Full Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4), provides \$375 million for juvenile justice programs for FY2025, the same amount that was provided for FY2024.

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Nathan Kemper

Analyst in Crime Policy

Kristin Finklea

Specialist in Domestic Security

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The federal government has no juvenile justice system of its own. Rather, juvenile justice is administered by the states. The federal government, though, seeks to influence states' juvenile justice systems through the administration of grant programs and the provision of funds.¹

This report provides a brief overview of funding for the juvenile justice-related grant programs administered by the Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Juvenile Justice Legislation and Grant Programs

A number of federally funded juvenile justice grant programs are authorized by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDP, P.L. 93-415). Since its enactment, the JJDP has been revised by several key amendments, including a significant reorganization in 2002 (by the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act; P.L. 107-273). Most recently, its grant programs were amended and reauthorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-385).

The JJDP as originally enacted had three main components: (1) it established OJJDP to coordinate and administer federal juvenile justice efforts; (2) it created grant programs to assist states with their juvenile justice systems; and (3) it promulgated core mandates to which states must adhere in order to be eligible for certain grant funding. Although the JJDP has been amended several times over the past 40+ years, it continues to feature these three components.

The JJDP has been the primary channel through which the federal government has provided juvenile justice funding to states. However, other programs also administered by OJJDP have contributed to overall federal juvenile justice funding.

The following section outlines various juvenile justice grant programs, including those authorized by the JJDP. Grant programs noted in this section have been congressionally authorized at some point in time and have received an appropriation at least once in the 10-year period from FY2016 through FY2025. Congress has also provided appropriations for juvenile justice programs that do not have separate authorizations of appropriations; these programs are not discussed in this section, but they are included in **Table 1**, which outlines funding for juvenile justice programs since FY2016.

State Formula Grant Program

The JJDP authorizes OJJDP to make formula grants to states² for the planning, establishment, operation, coordination, and evaluation of projects that develop more effective juvenile delinquency programs and improve juvenile justice systems.³ Funds are allocated annually based on each state's relative population of people under age 18. States must adhere to certain core requirements to receive their funding.⁴ The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-385)

¹ For more information on the legislative history of juvenile justice and details on the grant programs outlined in this report, refer to CRS Report RL33947, *Juvenile Justice: Legislative History and Current Legislative Issues*.

² In this report, the term *state* includes the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

³ 34 U.S.C. §11131.

⁴ There are four core requirements with which—unless for specified exceptions—states must generally comply: states must keep status offenders (such as truants) out of secure detention or correctional facilities; states cannot detain or (continued...)

amended the program and reauthorized its funding through FY2023. While its authorization of appropriations has expired, the program has continued to receive funding. For FY2025, this program was appropriated \$65 million (P.L. 119-4).

Title V Incentive Youth Promise Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention

The JJDP Act authorizes OJJDP to make grants to states, which are then transmitted through subgrants to units of local government (or nonprofits in partnership with units of local government) for delinquency prevention programs for juveniles who have come into contact with, or are at risk to come into contact with, the juvenile justice system.⁵ The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-385) amended the program and reauthorized its funding through FY2023. The JJDP Act also authorizes OJJDP to make grants to eligible Indian tribes to support delinquency prevention programs for at-risk youth or those who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system. Traditionally, Congress dedicates amounts from the total appropriation for the Title V program for specific programs and purposes areas (e.g., the Tribal Youth program). While its authorization of appropriations has expired, the program has continued to receive funding. For FY2025, this program was appropriated \$55 million (P.L. 119-4).

Victims of Child Abuse Act Grants

The Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 (Title II of the Crime Control Act of 1990, P.L. 101-647) authorizes several grant programs administered by OJJDP.

Subtitle A authorizes support for regional and local Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), including state chapters, and for related training and technical assistance (34 U.S.C. §§20301-20307). The CAC program was most recently reauthorized (through FY2028) via Section 3 of the Respect for Child Survivors Act (P.L. 117-354). For FY2025, it received \$41 million (P.L. 119-4).

Subtitle B authorizes support for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) (34 U.S.C. §§20321-20323) and Subtitle C authorizes training of judicial personnel to improve handling of child abuse and neglect proceedings (34 U.S.C. §§20331-20334). Funding for these activities was most recently reauthorized through FY2027 in the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 (Division W of P.L. 117-103). For FY2025, CASA received \$14 million and the training program received nearly \$5 million (P.L. 119-4).⁶

Juvenile Mentoring Program

The Juvenile Mentoring Program was authorized by the Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs Act (P.L. 102-586). Grants under this program are awarded to local educational agencies (in partnership with public or private agencies) to establish and support mentoring programs to reduce delinquent behavior, improve scholastic performance, and reduce

confine juveniles in facilities in which they would have contact with adult inmates; juveniles cannot be detained or confined in any jail or lockup for adults; and states must show that they are working to address racial and ethnic disparities within their juvenile justice systems.

⁵ 34 U.S.C. §11313.

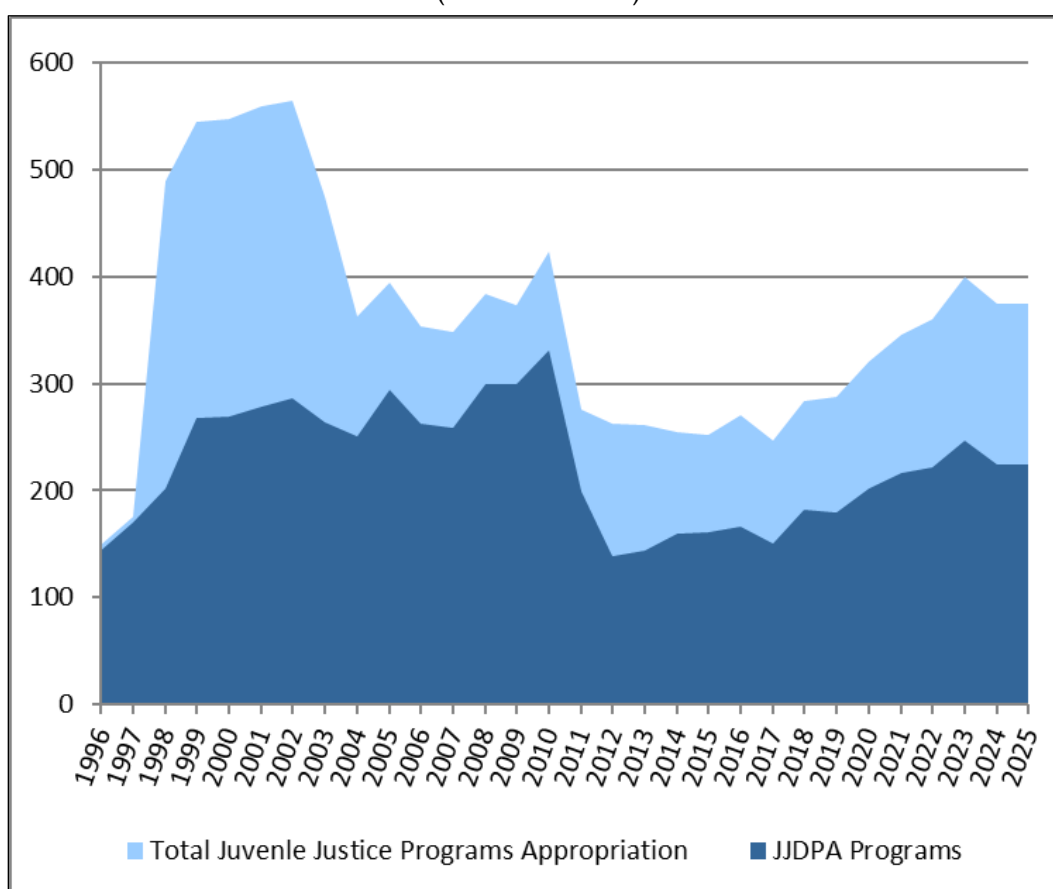
⁶ CASA is funded out of the State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance account rather than the Juvenile Justice Programs account; training for judicial personnel to improve handling of child abuse and neglect proceedings is funded out of the Juvenile Justice Programs account.

school dropouts.⁷ The program has continued to receive funding even though it was repealed in the 2002 JJDPA reauthorization (P.L. 107-273). For FY2025, this program was appropriated \$104 million (P.L. 119-4).

Total Juvenile Justice Appropriations

Congress appropriates funding for programs authorized by the JJDPA as well as for other non-JJDPA juvenile justice grant programs through the Juvenile Justice Programs account in the annual Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. **Figure 1** shows total appropriations for juvenile justice programs for the 30-year period from FY1996 through FY2025.

Figure 1. Total Juvenile Justice Programs Appropriations, FY1996-FY2025
(dollars in millions)



Sources: 1996 enacted taken from P.L. 104-134. FY1997 enacted taken from P.L. 104-208. FY1998 enacted taken from P.L. 105-119. FY1999 enacted taken from P.L. 105-277. FY2000 enacted taken from P.L. 106-113. FY2001 enacted taken from P.L. 106-553. FY2002 enacted taken from P.L. 107-77. FY2003 enacted taken from P.L. 108-7. FY2004 taken from P.L. 108-199. FY2005 taken from P.L. 108-447. FY2006 taken from P.L. 109-108. FY2007 appropriation is based on FY2006 enacted minus a 1.28% rescission, as per P.L. 110-5. FY2008 enacted taken from P.L. 110-161. FY2009 enacted taken from P.L. 111-8. FY2010 enacted taken from P.L. 111-117. FY2011 enacted based on a CRS analysis of the text of P.L. 112-10. FY2012 enacted taken from P.L. 112-55.

⁷ For more information on the Juvenile Mentoring Program and youth mentoring, see CRS Report RL34306, *Vulnerable Youth: Federal Mentoring Programs and Issues*.

FY2013 amount provided by the U.S. Department of Justice. FY2014 enacted taken from P.L. 113-76. FY2015 enacted taken from P.L. 113-235. FY2016 enacted taken from P.L. 114-113. FY2017 enacted taken from P.L. 115-31. FY2018 enacted taken from P.L. 115-141. FY2019 enacted taken from P.L. 116-6. FY2020 enacted taken from P.L. 116-93. FY2021 enacted taken from P.L. 116-260. FY2022 enacted taken from P.L. 117-103. FY2023 enacted taken from P.L. 117-328. FY2024 enacted taken from P.L. 118-42. FY2025 enacted taken from P.L. 119-4.

Notes: Numbers are rounded. Amounts are in nominal dollars. The amounts include all rescissions of current year budget authority. The FY2013 funding level also reflects sequestration pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25). JJDP = Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 93-415).

In nominal dollars, funding for juvenile justice programs peaked in 2002 at \$565 million. From FY2002 to FY2007, however, overall funding fell by 38% to \$348 million. The majority of this reduction came from cuts to the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) program.⁸ From FY2007 to FY2010, total funding for juvenile justice programs increased by almost 22% to \$424 million, with funding for JJDP programs increasing by 27% to \$331 million over this same period. This was the largest juvenile justice appropriation since FY2003.

Funding for juvenile justice programs again began to decline in FY2011, and that decline generally continued through FY2017. From FY2010 to FY2017, total funding for juvenile justice programs decreased by nearly 42%, from \$424 million to \$247 million. Contributing to this drop, Congress eliminated funding for the Challenge Grants⁹ in FY2011 and for the JABG program in FY2014. During this time period, Congress also started appropriating funding for programs that had not previously been funded under the Juvenile Justice Programs account, including funding for missing and exploited children programs and child abuse training programs for judicial personnel and practitioners.

After appropriating \$247 million for juvenile justice programs in FY2017, Congress increased juvenile justice funding annually from FY2018 through FY2023. Congress increased funding for juvenile justice programs to nearly \$283 million for FY2018, which included funds for a new Opioid Affected Youth Initiative. Congress again increased juvenile justice program funding to \$287 million in FY2019, and it set aside money for an initiative serving children exposed to violence.¹⁰ Congress then increased funding for juvenile justice programs to \$320 million for FY2020 and included a new set-aside from the JJDP Title V Incentive Grant program for grants to prevent trafficking of girls. Congress continued to increase funding for FY2021 through FY2023, when it appropriated \$400 million for juvenile justice programs—the largest appropriation since the \$424 million provided in FY2010. Congress most recently decreased funding for juvenile justice programs, appropriating \$375 million for each of FY2024 and FY2025. This included a \$10 million reduction in funding for the JJDP Title II State Formula Grants and a \$10 million reduction for the JJDP Title V Incentive Grants relative to FY2023 levels.

⁸ Although the authorization for the JABG program was not a part of the JJDP, it nevertheless was administered by OJJDP. The JABG program authorized the Attorney General to make grants to states and units of local government to strengthen their juvenile justice systems, including holding juveniles accountable for their actions. Authorization for this program expired in FY2009, but Congress continued to provide appropriations through FY2013.

⁹ The Challenge Grants program authorized OJJDP to make discretionary grants to state, local, and tribal governments and private entities to carry out programs to develop, test, or demonstrate promising new initiatives that may prevent, control, or reduce juvenile delinquency. The program last received appropriations in FY2010.

¹⁰ Funding for this purpose was previously provided under the State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Account from FY2012 to FY2016.

Historical Appropriations by Program

Table 1 provides a breakdown of funding for the Juvenile Justice Programs account by program for the 10-year period from FY2016 to FY2025.

Appropriations for specific programs in the Juvenile Justice Programs account can vary from year to year. In addition, Congress sometimes provides funding for programs as a specific line item in the Juvenile Justice Programs account, but in other years funding for those programs is provided as a set-aside from another program in the account. For example, the Community-Based Violence Prevention Initiative received line-item appropriations in some fiscal years and has been funded by set-asides from the Title V Incentive Grants program in other years. By contrast, some programs, when funded, have consistently been funded through set-asides from the Title V program (e.g., the Tribal Youth program).

Table 1. Juvenile Justice Appropriations by Program, FY2016-FY2025

(dollars in millions)

Program	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
State Formula Grants	58	55	60	60	63	67	70	75	65	65
<i>Emergency Planning— Juvenile Detention Facilities</i>	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Juvenile Mentoring Program Grant	90	80	94	95	97	100	102	107	104	104
Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention	18	15	28	25	42	49	50	65	55	55
<i>Tribal Youth Program</i>	(10)	—	(5)	(5)	(5)	(10)	(14)	(17)	(16)	(16)
<i>Gang Prevention</i>	(5)	(4)	(4)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Community-Based Violence Prevention Initiative</i>	—	(8)	(8)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Children of Incarcerated Parents Web Portal</i>	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	—	—
<i>Girls in the Juvenile Justice System</i>	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(5)	(6)	(5)	(5)
<i>Opioid Affected Youth Initiative</i>	—	—	(8)	(9)	(10)	(10)	(12)	(13)	(11)	(11)
<i>Children Exposed to Violence Initiative</i>	—	—	—	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(10)	(9)	(9)
<i>Prevention of Trafficking of Girls</i>	—	—	—	—	(2)	(2)	(4)	(5)	(4)	(4)
<i>Vulnerable and At-Risk Youth Initiative</i>	—	—	—	—	—	—	(3)	(2)	—	—
Victims of Child Abuse Act	20	21	21	23	27	30	33	41	41	41
Community-Based Violence Prevention Initiative	8	— ^a	— ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Training for Judicial Personnel	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	5	5	5
Missing and Exploited Children	72	73	76	82	88	94	99	105	103	103
Improving Indigent Defense	3	2	2	—	—	3	3	3	3	3

Program	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
Total Juvenile Justice Appropriation	270	247	283	287	320	346	360	400	375	375

Sources: FY2016 enacted taken from P.L. 114-113. FY2017 enacted taken from P.L. 115-31. FY2018 enacted taken from P.L. 115-141. FY2019 enacted taken from P.L. 116-6. FY2020 enacted taken from P.L. 116-93. FY2021 enacted taken from P.L. 116-260. FY2022 enacted taken from P.L. 117-103. FY2023 enacted taken from P.L. 117-328. FY2024 enacted taken from P.L. 118-42. FY2025 enacted taken from P.L. 119-4.

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are nonadds that have been set aside from other grant programs. Amounts may not add to totals due to rounding. Amounts are in nominal dollars.

a. For FY2017 and FY2018, funding for the Community-Based Violence Prevention Initiative was appropriated as set-aside funding from the Title V Incentive Grants.

Author Information

Nathan Kemper
Analyst in Crime Policy

Kristin Finklea
Specialist in Domestic Security

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