

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-351](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Justice's (DOJ) OJJDP, housed within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), awarded about \$74 million in VOCA grants from fiscal years 2010 through 2013. VOCA grants are designed to help improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. Senate Report 113-78 included a provision for GAO to conduct a review related to the administration of OJJDP grant programs.

This report addresses the extent to which OJJDP (1) ensures the timely expenditure of VOCA grants and (2) assesses the performance of VOCA grantees. GAO analyzed OJJDP documentation—such as program guidelines, grantee progress reports, and expenditure data—from fiscal years 2010 through 2013. Additionally, GAO interviewed DOJ officials and the universe of VOCA grantees about their experiences with the program.

What GAO Recommends

To ensure the effective administration of VOCA grant funds, GAO recommends, among other things, that OJP work with OJJDP to examine and address its administrative review processes to reduce delays in VOCA spending, establish and enforce a clear grant extension policy, and better align the VOCA performance measures with available data collection tools while also clarifying grantee reporting requirements. OJP concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-15-351](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or MaurerD@gao.gov.

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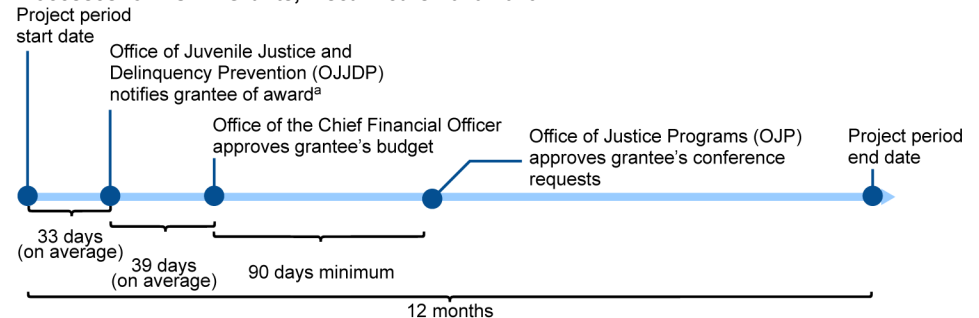
VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE ACT

Further Actions Needed to Ensure Timely Use of Grant Funds and Assess Grantee Performance

What GAO Found

For the 28 Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCA) grants the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) awarded from fiscal years 2010 through 2013, grantees expended less than 20 percent, on average, of each grant they received during the original 12-month project period. OJJDP has several administrative review and approval processes in place that have contributed to delays in grantees' ability to begin spending their funds. For instance, grantees cannot access their funds until OJJDP completes its internal review of grantees' budgets, a step that has taken more than 2 months, on average, after the project period began. Further, OJJDP's guidance on grant extensions is unclear and irregularly enforced. For example, one document states that generally only one extension per award is permissible, while another states that multiple extensions may be granted for up to a total of 5 years. OJJDP guidance further requires grantees to submit a narrative justification with their requests. However, OJJDP approved 72 of 73 extension requests from fiscal years 2010 through 2013 without such justification. Examining the delays associated with its administrative review processes and clarifying and enforcing the extension policy for VOCA grants would help OJJDP ensure the effective administration and timely use of grant funds.

Average Review Timeline for Selected Grant Requirements and Related Administrative Processes for VOCA Grants, Fiscal Years 2010-2013



Source: GAO analysis of Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCA) grant information. | GAO-15-351

^aThe Assistant Attorney General for OJP is responsible for officially notifying applicants that they have received an award.

OJJDP does not have complete data to assess VOCA grantees' performance against the measures it has established. Specifically, OJJDP establishes performance measures in the VOCA grant solicitations and requires grantees to submit data on these measures. However, the performance measures it has established for the VOCA grant program do not fully align with the tools it has created to collect data for all OJJDP grants. Further, five of the six VOCA grantees reported that they have not received guidance on which measures to include in their required reports. Accordingly, grantees did not consistently report on the established performance measures as required. Better aligning the established VOCA performance measures with existing data collection tools and clarifying grantee reporting requirements would better ensure OJJDP has the data it needs to assess the effectiveness of the VOCA grant programs.