

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-482](#), a report to the Chairwoman, Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Deficiencies identified in multiple DOL Inspector General audits since 2009 and two student deaths in 2015 have raised concerns regarding the safety and security of Job Corps students. GAO was asked to review safety and security of students in the Job Corps program. GAO's June 2017 testimony summarized preliminary observations. This report further examines (1) the number and types of reported safety and security incidents involving Job Corps students; (2) student perceptions of their safety at Job Corps centers; and (3) the extent to which ETA has taken steps to address safety and security at Job Corps centers.

GAO analyzed ETA's reported incident data for Job Corps centers from July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017. GAO also analyzed ETA's student survey data from the same period, reviewed relevant documentation, and interviewed ETA officials at its national office and all six regions. GAO also visited two Job Corps centers that had different operators and at least 100 recent incidents. These two centers are not generalizable to all centers.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to DOL, including that ETA develop additional monitoring guidance and a comprehensive plan for safety and security. DOL agreed with GAO's three recommendations.

View [GAO-18-482](#). For more information, contact Cindy Brown Barnes at (202) 512-7215 or brownbarnesc@gao.gov.

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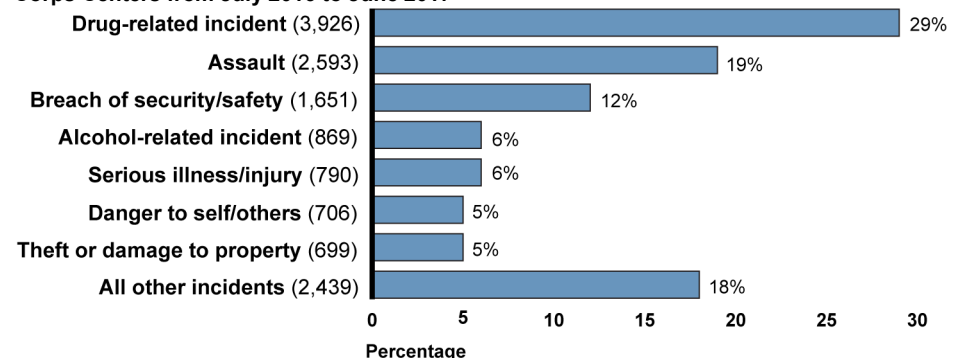
JOB CORPS

DOL Could Enhance Safety and Security at Centers with Consistent Monitoring and Comprehensive Planning

What GAO Found

Job Corps centers reported 13,673 safety and security incidents involving students from July 2016 to June 2017, according to GAO's analysis of the Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) data. Most reported incidents occurred onsite and involved recently enrolled male students under age 20. During that time, the program served about 79,000 students at 125 Job Corps centers, according to ETA officials. ETA's Office of Job Corps administers the program, which is the nation's largest residential, educational, and career and technical training program for low-income youth generally between the ages of 16 and 24. Drug-related incidents and assaults accounted for 48 percent of all reported incidents (see fig.).

Types of Onsite and Offsite Safety and Security Incidents Involving Students Reported by Job Corps Centers from July 2016 to June 2017



Source: GAO analysis of Employment and Training Administration (ETA) data. | GAO-18-482

Students generally felt safe at Job Corps centers, yet fewer felt safe in some situations, based on GAO's analysis of ETA's September 2016 and March 2017 Job Corps student satisfaction surveys. At least 70 percent of students reported that they felt safe on half of the 12 safety-related questions in the 49 question survey about their experiences in the Job Corps program; but fewer students reported feeling safe when asked if they were made to feel unimportant or if they heard students threaten each other. ETA plans to administer a new survey nationally by January 2019 that focuses solely on safety and security issues.

ETA has initiated several actions to improve safety and security at Job Corps centers, but insufficient guidance for its monitoring staff and absence of a comprehensive plan for safety and security may put the success of these actions at risk. Among its actions, ETA adopted a new risk-based monitoring strategy to identify emerging problems at the centers. Officials GAO spoke with in five of ETA's regional offices said that the new strategy has improved monitoring, but that more guidance on how to interpret and apply safety and security policies is needed to promote consistency across centers. Also, ETA lacks a comprehensive plan linking its new efforts to an overall safety and security framework. ETA officials told GAO that limited staff capacity and lack of expertise have hindered their efforts in developing such a plan. Without a comprehensive plan, ETA runs the risk that its new efforts will not be successful.