

# INFOCUS



Caren Harp, Administrator

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## Support for Prosecutors Who Work With Youth

One of the ways the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) ensures children are free from violence and crime is by increasing the competency of prosecutors involved in child welfare and juvenile delinquency cases.

Cases involving the physical or sexual abuse of children are among the most difficult to prosecute. In addition to not wanting to retraumatize the child, several factors—such as difficulty eliciting testimony from young victims, a lack of forensic or corroborative evidence due to delayed disclosure by the child or a witness, and the quality of the investigative child interview—affect a prosecutor's decision to move forward with the case and the case outcome. OJJDP's specialized training and technical assistance help prosecutors overcome such obstacles.

Juvenile crime has serious implications for youth and communities. Prosecutors must make thoughtful, research-informed decisions to protect the public and offer delinquent youth opportunities for rehabilitation. They must also contend with challenges specific to juvenile court. Evolving victim rights laws, transfer to adult criminal court, and expanded juvenile court jurisdiction are some of the complex issues that prosecutors face. OJJDP's robust training curriculum helps juvenile prosecutors successfully balance youth justice with public safety.

### Training and Technical Assistance

#### Training and Technical Assistance for Child Abuse Prosecutors Program

This program aims to improve prosecutors' interactions with child victims, child-interviewing techniques, investigative methods, and presentation of evidence in court. In fiscal year 2019, the program supported 59 trainings on child abuse prosecution. More than 5,600 professionals attended the trainings.

#### Addressing the Training Needs of Juvenile Prosecutors

Funding through this program helps states develop or expand training for juvenile prosecutors and their support staff. The program promotes training in trial techniques, procedural law, assessing risk and protective factors for youth, and determining youth's readiness for rehabilitation.

OJJDP also funds training and technical assistance to help prosecutors lead juvenile justice system improvements within their communities. The training teaches prosecutors how to design and implement proven strategies to reduce offending and improve youth outcomes.

### For More Information

Access additional information about how OJJDP is supporting juvenile and child abuse prosecutors at <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/publications/in-focus-support-for-prosecutors.pdf>.

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### Funding

Between fiscal years 2017 and 2019, OJJDP provided more than \$6.5 million to build the capacity of juvenile prosecutors and attorneys who prosecute child welfare cases.

- ▶ Fiscal Year 2019—\$3.9 million
- ▶ Fiscal Year 2018—\$1.9 million
- ▶ Fiscal Year 2017—\$750,000

### From the Field

OJJDP's training institute, The Role of the Juvenile Prosecutor, highlights the traditional role of prosecutors and contemporary issues in juvenile justice such as the impact of trauma on youth, key considerations in diversion, and child exploitation and trafficking.

During the 2019 institute, Administrator Harp discussed OJJDP's commitment to training juvenile prosecutors and lauded the expertise of the faculty. Richard H., a deputy prosecuting attorney from Indiana and an institute participant, concurred. "Having experienced instructors who have dealt with a variety of cases, defense attorneys, and judges share their knowledge and expertise was very valuable."

McKenzie K., an assistant prosecutor from Ohio, added, "I learned about ethics in law school, but it wasn't specific to the job of a juvenile prosecutor. It was interesting to hear about ethics from a lens of what I do daily."

Office of Juvenile Justice and  
Delinquency Prevention  
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