

INFOCUS



Liz Ryan, Administrator

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Support for Prosecutors Who Work With Youth

Prosecutors who work with youth have a difficult and essential job. Whether prosecuting a delinquency case or a child welfare case, a prosecutor's decisions can potentially change the trajectory of a young person's life.

Prosecutors need ongoing training to help them develop best practices in juvenile court and keep them up to date on evolving topics such as adolescent brain development, **risk and needs assessments**, expanded **juvenile court jurisdiction**, and jurisprudence in child sexual abuse cases. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides rigorous training and technical to increase the competency of prosecutors who work with youth.

Training and Technical Assistance

Addressing the Training Needs of Juvenile Prosecutors

State prosecutors who are tasked with prosecuting youth often encounter challenges that are vastly different from those associated with prosecuting adults. This program trains prosecutors and their support staff on topics specific to juvenile court. Topics include trial techniques, procedural law, assessing risk and protective factors, and determining youth's readiness for rehabilitation.

As the juvenile justice system has evolved, so has the role of the juvenile prosecutor. Today, dedicated prosecutors across the country are partnering with community stakeholders and supporting early interventions to prevent delinquency before it begins. OJJDP also funds training and technical assistance to help prosecutors lead these efforts within their communities.

Training and Technical Assistance for Child Abuse Prosecutors Program

Cases involving the abuse of children are among the most challenging to prosecute. 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.

This **program** aims to improve prosecutors' interactions with young victims, child interviewing techniques, investigative methods, and presentation of evidence in court. In fiscal year 2021, the program supported 81 trainings on child abuse prosecution. More than 9,500 professionals attended the trainings.

For More Information

Learn more how OJJDP is supporting juvenile and child abuse prosecutors at ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/support-for-prosecutors-who-work-with-youth.

Funding

Between fiscal years 2019 and 2021, OJJDP provided \$7.2 million to build the capacity of juvenile prosecutors and attorneys who prosecute delinquency and child welfare cases.

- ▶ Fiscal Year 2021—\$500,000
- ▶ Fiscal Year 2020—\$2.7 million
- ▶ Fiscal Year 2019—\$4.0 million

From the Field

OJJDP sponsored a 2-day **training institute** for juvenile prosecutors and law enforcement personnel in June 2022. Presenters highlighted prosecutors' roles in facilitating positive police-youth engagement and in collaborating with community-based service providers to improve outcomes for youth and families.

A deputy district attorney from Alabama shared that the training made them "more aware of the role I have in the system and the importance of using that to the best of my ability."

Additional training topics included child and adolescent development, prosecuting serious and violent offenses, and gang-reduction strategies. A session on how trauma impacts cognitive and emotional development and decisionmaking provided a deputy county attorney from Nebraska with an "alternative perspective on how adverse childhood experiences and resiliency are closely tied into juvenile prosecution work."

Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention
ojjdp.ojp.gov