

State Profile of Federal Juvenile Justice Funding: Vermont

Overview

The Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs (CFCPP) facilitates Vermont's participation in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The 21-member Council has three primary functions: (1) advise the governor, legislature and juvenile justice system actors on implementation of the JJDP and advise on child and youth impact regarding practice, policy, and legislative proposals; (2) monitor the state's compliance with the JJDP; and (3) make grants to develop and implement juvenile justice and primary prevention programs in partnership with the Vermont Department for Children and Families.

Current Funding

The current funding levels for juvenile justice in Vermont represent a 60% decrease since FY 2010. This is due in part to the elimination of Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) funding and a series of earmarks that were placed on Title V funding. Although Vermont has a generally low (and steadily decreasing) crime rate, and consistently ranks among the safest states in the nation, young people age 16 – 17 years old are routinely prosecuted directly ("direct filed") in adult criminal court, even for misdemeanor offenses. In 2013, the State of Vermont instituted a Family (juvenile) Court Rule mandating the submission of race data to the court with all delinquency filings. Though this rule has not yet provided anticipated results, it was a positive step and is expected to provide improvement to juvenile court race data availability. Because State law enforcement still relies on visual identification of suspects, following the national law enforcement standard, there are few captures of Hispanic ethnicity. These issues – the overreliance on the adult criminal justice system and a dearth of information on minority contact – have become focus points for the CFCPP. With the federal investment in juvenile justice, the Council has begun to take action to address these problems, as follows:

The Title II Formula Grants Program

Since FY2014, Vermont received a Title II allocation of \$393,667. One-third of those monies are directed to the Vermont Children's Trust Fund. The trust, which also includes state and private funds, provides grants to small community-based organizations to deliver services to children and youth. The balance of Title II funds are historically dedicated to system improvement. For

State Summary

Total FY2014 Federal Investment (Title II only, JABG and Title V were not available):
\$393,667

FY2010 Federal Investment:
\$974,045

Decrease in funding:
60% since FY2010.

example, Vermont used most of the grant funds for FY2011-12 to finance early interventions using the Strengthening Families model to help families identified as high risk for child maltreatment in three regions of the State. A small amount of funding was used to complete Children's Trust Fund and statewide Court Diversion system enhancement. The latter grant was intended to divert 16 and 17 year olds from the adult courts. Funds are allocated to finance a resource position designed to help state prosecutors reduce youth case filings in adult court, increase direct referrals to community-based restorative justice programs, and improve race data collection in the juvenile court.

- Funds are allocated to a statewide legal services program that will advocate for youth and families and help to establish improved practice to reduce the number of youth who are suspended and expelled from school, especially youth of color and those with disabilities.
- An award to train several communities in evidence-based, trauma-informed positive youth development, and to provide training to staff of the secure youth detention/ corrections facility to implement a youth skills group.
- Funding of expenses necessary for PREA compliance and audit in youth facilities.¹
- Funding to conduct quasi-judicial review of youth in detention

The Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Program (JABG)

In FY 2010 Vermont received \$289,100 in JABG funds. This sum was reduced to \$104,338 in FY 2013, and in FY2014 and FY2015 this pool of money was zeroed out entirely.

JABG funds were previously used to supplement the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument program as well as to develop the workforce training component of Vermont's juvenile justice systems reform efforts. The workforce training funded in part by JABG dollars was dedicated to helping juvenile justice system actors – including members of the judiciary and prosecutors – to understand the evidence behind targeting risk and needs to improve outcomes for system-involved youth and to prevent youth system-involvement. The funding also supported training in motivational interviewing for social workers and probation officers and youth serving entities, and allowed the DSA to successfully implement the evidence-based approaches of family group conferencing and restorative justice in every district in the state. None of this money, however, was available during the current fiscal year.

Vermont has also historically used JABG funds to enhance the State Child and Family Services implementation of probation supports. Now some of these expenses are being taken from the Title II award that has normally been used for community-based system improvement.

The Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Program

The federal investment in JJDP A Title V programs in Vermont was \$84,945 in FY2010. Most recently, Vermont funded two communities to improve service to students – a truancy reduction program, and youth-led experiential learning opportunities in the community. This year, these funds were not available, making the sustainment of these types of projects difficult.

¹ Title II allocations to PREA total ¼ of total award.