

CJA 101: Quick Facts About the Children's Justice Act Grant



The Children's Justice Act (CJA) provides grants to States to improve the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child victim. CJA grantees are responsible for implementing the requirements of the CJA grant program to reform state processes for responding to child abuse and neglect. This fact sheet provides information about the requirements of the CJA grant program and resources available to grantees in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

Since fiscal year 2000, \$17 million in CJA funds as authorized by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) have been made available annually for distribution to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands. Funds are allocated in the amount of \$50,000 per state, plus an additional amount based on the population of children under 18 years of age in the applicant's jurisdiction.

Funding for CJA comes from the Crime Victims Fund, which collects fines and fees charged to persons convicted of federal crimes. The fund is administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), and the grants are awarded by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (Children's Justice Act Fact Sheet, May 2012; <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/childrens-justice-act>)

Focus of the CJA Grant:

CJA funding provides assistance for states and territories to improve their approach and response to child abuse and neglect. The focus of the funding is to create systemic changes that prevent additional trauma to child victims, and to more effectively protect their rights.

Section 107(a) of CAPTA outlines the purpose of CJA funding, which is to assist states developing, establishing, and operating programs designed to improve:

- (1) The assessment and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, including cases of suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child and the child's family;
- (2) The assessment and investigation of cases of suspected child abuse-related fatalities and suspected child neglect-related fatalities;
- (3) The investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation; and
- (4) The assessment and investigation of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are suspected victims of child abuse or neglect.

Because CJA grants focus on general systemic improvements specifically for children's justice, funding for direct treatment services or prevention programs is not an appropriate use of CJA funding (CJA Program Instruction, March 2017; <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1703.pdf>).

CJA Grant Eligibility Requirements:

To qualify for CJA funding, states must establish and maintain a multidisciplinary task force on children's justice and meet the eligibility requirements for the CAPTA Basic State Grant.

1. **Task force membership requirements:** The task force must be composed of professionals with knowledge and experience relating to the criminal justice system and issues of child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child maltreatment-related fatalities. In addition, the task force must include representatives of parents' groups, adult former victims of child abuse and neglect, and individuals experienced in working with children with disabilities and homeless children

and youth. A complete list of requirements for task force membership is available in Section 107(c)(1) of CAPTA at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/capta.pdf>.

Task force members can represent only one professional category in the task force, though they may have experience in multiple categories. For example, if a prospective member represents a parents' group and works with children with disabilities, the member can either represent the parents' group or the group working with children with disabilities.

2. **Purpose of the task force:** The task force is required to make policy and training recommendations for systems improvements in the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation cases, and child maltreatment-related fatalities. In order to do that, the task force must conduct statewide assessment upon the initial CJA grant application and at three-year intervals thereafter.
3. **Assessment requirements:** Initial and three-year assessments must outline reviews, evaluations, and recommendations in all required areas identified in CAPTA Sec. 107(e)(1)(A), (B) and (C). View the full requirements in the CAPTA handbook at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/capta.pdf>.
4. **Required categories for use of CJA funds:** State task force projects selected for CJA funding must support front-end efforts or intake and investigation phases of child welfare cases. CJA grantees must implement recommendations in each of the following categories, as required by legislation:
 - a. Investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect. Related Recommendation Example: Expand availability of Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigation (SUIDI) training to include professionals involved in the investigation, prosecution, and court handling in cases of child maltreatment. Related Activity Example: Six cross-disciplinary statewide trainings addressing SUIDI will be provided over the next year.
 - b. Experimental, model, and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches. Related Recommendation Example: Support policies and programs that will promote a consistent, coordinated multidisciplinary response to serious cases of child abuse/neglect as well as improve the coordination between the criminal justice system and civil child protection system. Related Activity Example: Provide support for the launch of a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) enhancement program, including evaluation of the program's implementation and impact at local child advocacy centers.
 - c. Reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, and procedures. Related Recommendation Example: Increase the number of reports of child abuse and neglect to the mandated investigative agency when those reports are received from within the school system. Related Activity Example: Collaborate with school administrators/educators to identify current practices and procedures in addressing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.

The ongoing activities of a state task force in monitoring implementation of its recommendations and continuing interagency collaboration related to CJA also may be supported by CJA funds.

Contact Information

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