



National Council on Crime and Delinquency
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Congressman Henry Waxman

Dear Honorable Congressman Waxman:

I am writing about the hearings that you will be holding this week about the grant making processes at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). We at the National Council of Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) have grave concerns about recent decisions on grant proposals and how these have hurt the credibility of the OJJDP.

First, some background on the NCCD. We are the nation's oldest 501(c)(3) organization in the justice field. Last year the NCCD celebrated its 100th anniversary. The Council was pivotal in the drafting and enactment of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 and the creation of the OJJDP.

Over the years, the NCCD has received scores of grants from the US Department of Justice that have totaled over \$25 million. We have been very successful in winning competitive research and training grants from all Office of Justice Programs divisions. We have had our share of proposals that were not successful in peer-reviewed competitions. In the past year, the NCCD had two active research grants from OJJDP that maintained ongoing projects, including an evaluation of Parents Anonymous and a study of an innovative mental health program operated by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.

We applied as one of over 120 applicants to OJJDP to become a National Program grantee. These were substantial multi-year grants that were well suited for the priorities of the NCCD. One proposal sought to create a national training and technical assistance center for practitioners working with girls in the juvenile justice system—a largely ignored special needs population. The second proposal sought to establish a national program to help the parents of children in immigrant communities to keep their youngsters away from the dangerous activities of gangs. We believed that these proposals were very responsive to the priorities laid out by OJJDP in its solicitation.

Neither proposal was funded. The NCCD received only a brief letter informing us of this fact, but not giving any reasons for the denial. I assumed that our proposals were fairly beaten by better efforts, receiving lower scores by reviewers than other competitors. I subsequently learned from Youth Today that the NCCD proposal scored higher than most of the groups that received funding. The proposal for a national center for justice-involved

girls was the 4th highest rated proposal, and our second proposal ranked 11th. I understand that OJJDP awarded at least 15 grants in the competition.

We were also dismayed that OJJDP did not go through a standard peer-review process and that proposals were only reviewed by staff. Moreover, apparently Mr. Robert Flores added additional criteria to the selection process that were not announced in the RFP. Had we known about these other criteria, the NCCD might have not submitted at all or might have substantially altered our approach to the proposed projects. In any event, the NCCD expended substantial time and resources in good faith to prepare these proposals. Now it seems that the review process was far from fair. We have subsequently learned from Youth Today that the Assistant Attorney General of the OJP was not fully briefed on the selection process. To my knowledge, since the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, the OJJDP Administrator has had to seek the approval of the OJP before final awards could be made.

Although the NCCD is disappointed to be denied funding for projects that we believe are very crucial to the mission of OJJDP, more troubling is that the selection process was so flawed. This sort of arbitrary and capricious decision making harms the credibility and diminishes the stature of the OJJDP. The decision making process appears to violate the rules laid out in most standard federal grant reviews. The NCCD is very supportive of your efforts to look into to this matter closely and to hold OJJDP accountable to fair and rational grant making processes.

Respectfully yours,



Barry Krisberg, PhD
President