



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Bureau of Justice Assistance Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program**

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of [a report](#) examining the Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) administration of the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP). COSSAP's purpose is to provide financial and technical assistance to states, local governments, and Indian tribal governments to plan, develop, implement, or expand comprehensive efforts to identify, respond to, treat, and support those affected by illicit opioids, stimulants, and other drugs of abuse. During fiscal years (FY) 2017 to 2021, BJA awarded a total of \$648 million in COSSAP grants.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that, generally, grant recipients made progress with their grant-funded projects, but project activity stalled during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also identified several areas of improvement specific to BJA's implementation of COSSAP, including:

- **BJA Should Consistently Apply and Disclose the Factors Used to Evaluate COSSAP Applications.** We determined that BJA did not consistently apply to all COSSAP applications, or fully disclose, a preference it used to evaluate them. Specifically, in September 2020, BJA awarded over \$147 million in COSSAP funds to 110 applicants. However, an application by the City of Minneapolis was denied funding despite meeting all the basic eligibility requirements, receiving a low-risk rating, and scoring second highest among 212 prospective applicants. We found the application was denied because of a concern that the "defund the police" movement advocated by some Minneapolis council members during the summer of 2020 would prevent the proper administration of the COSSAP grant. We examined the process BJA used to reach its decision to deny funding the Minneapolis application and concluded that BJA's justification for denying Minneapolis funding contained critical errors and omissions that we believe rendered the justification inadequate, and that BJA did not evaluate other COSSAP applicants based on similar circumstances.
  - **BJA Had Not Completed its Mandatory Assessment of COSSAP in a Timely Manner.** COSSAP's authorizing legislation required a DOJ evaluation of COSSAP's effectiveness by July 2021. The legislation also required evaluation results be published and issued to Congress no later than 90 days after the completion of the evaluation. We determined the evaluation results were not submitted to Congress until at least 20 months after the due date. According to OJP, by December 2023, a report of evaluation results was sent to Congress.
  - **BJA Should Evaluate its Coordination and Collaboration Activities to Measure the Impact These Activities Have Towards Accomplishing COSSAP Objectives.** We found that BJA has not assessed the performance of its coordination and collaborative activities. Absent such an evaluation, BJA cannot determine the impact that these activities have on achieving COSSAP
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objectives and deliverables. Such an evaluation would allow BJA to fully measure its progress toward achieving COSSAP's goals and objectives.

The DOJ OIG made a total of five recommendations to the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). OJP agreed with all the recommendations.

**Report:** Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/audit-bureau-justice-assistance-comprehensive-opioid-stimulant-and-substance-abuse-program>

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