



School Safety Grants and Plans

Background

2017 Wisconsin Act 143, which was enacted in March 2018, created the Office of School Safety in the Department of Justice (DOJ). Act 143 appropriated \$100.0 million in fiscal year 2018-19 for awarding school safety grants to school districts, private schools, independent charter schools, and tribal schools. Act 143 also required school districts and private schools to include additional information in their statutorily required school safety plans and to submit copies of these plans to DOJ by January 1, 2019, and then before every January 1 thereafter.

Key Findings

- In 2018, DOJ awarded \$94.5 million in 1,325 school safety grants to school districts, private schools, independent charter schools, and tribal schools. As of mid-July 2019, DOJ had reimbursed grant recipients \$35.8 million.
- We reviewed DOJ's files for a sample of 70 grants that totaled \$17.6 million, or 18.6 percent of the total amount of all grants awarded. We found that DOJ appropriately administered and oversaw these 70 grants.
- As of mid-April 2019, 61.5 percent of school districts, private schools, and independent charter schools had submitted a total of 779 school safety plans to DOJ.
- We found that most of the 779 school safety plans contained information about at least six of seven types of school safety guidelines and procedures required by statutes. However, a number of plans contained relatively little information pertaining to certain guidelines and procedures.
- Our review of all 779 school safety plans found a number of examples of best practices pertaining to emergency prevention and mitigation, emergency preparedness, emergency response, emergency recovery, school safety assessments, school safety drills, and school building blueprints.
- We surveyed 1,210 administrators of all school districts, private schools, independent charter schools, and tribal schools about school safety issues. Most respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the cooperation received from external entities when they created school safety plans and with the school safety grants and training provided by DOJ.
- We surveyed 521 local law enforcement agencies about school safety issues. Respondents indicated that they were more satisfied with various aspects of school safety at school districts than at private schools.

Recommendations

We recommend DOJ use the results of our surveys to consider ways to provide school districts and schools with additional training and support pertaining to school safety issues. We also identify three issues for legislative consideration.

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