



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

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### **JUSTICE AWARDS \$11 MILLION TO ENHANCE STATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RECORDS**

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) today announced almost \$11 million in awards to state agencies to improve the completeness, quality and accessibility of the nation's criminal record systems. Of this amount, more than \$2.4 million was awarded to 15 jurisdictions to improve coordination and enhance the accuracy of data entered into local, state and national databases on stalking and domestic violence. Since 1995 awards of more than \$506 million have gone to all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico.

Funding is provided under the Department's National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP). NCHIP helps the states automate and upgrade records that link to systems administered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), including the National Sex Offender Registry, the National Protection Order File, the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System, the National Crime Information Center and the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS Index), which supports instant background checks on persons attempting to purchase firearms.

Complete, accurate and immediately accessible criminal records enable states to:

- Immediately identify individuals with prior criminal records in any state.
- More effectively identify felons and others prohibited from firearm purchase.
- Check backgrounds of persons responsible for child, elder and disabled care.
- Identify individuals who have a history of domestic violence or stalking.
- Make informed decisions relating to pretrial release and detention of arrestees, prosecutions of career criminals and appropriate correctional confinement of convicted offenders.

“Accurate criminal history records improve our nation's security and ensure that disqualified persons are not placed in positions of national trust or given responsibility for protecting the nation's airports or other sensitive areas,” Attorney General Alberto Gonzales pointed out. “Continued support for these efforts is imperative for this administration,” he said. President Bush's FY 2006 budget

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requested \$61 million for NCHIP grants. However, the final budget enacted by Congress provided \$12.9 million for the program. For FY 2007, the administration's budget seeks \$39 million for the program. "We are hopeful that Congress will fully fund the President's request," Gonzales said.

Federal assistance has helped 48 states participate in the FBI's Interstate Identification Index, which is the national system through which name-based criminal background checks are conducted and which links to over 53 million criminal history records. More than 950,000 protection order records in the NCIC Protection Order File help to avert stalking and other crimes and are available for background checks. In addition, more than 442,000 convicted sex offenders have detailed records in the NCIC Convicted Sexual Offender Registry File.

"The states and territories have made tremendous progress in employing technology in this area," according to BJS Director Jeffrey Sedgwick, "but data quality and completeness issues need continuing attention." According to Sedgwick, criminal history records frequently reflect information gaps because outcomes of criminal cases go unreported to state and national files or cannot be linked to arrest fingerprint records. "This grant program allows the jurisdictions to focus efforts on these problems," he said.

NCHIP awards were made to the state agencies designated by the governor and by the District of Columbia's mayor. The FY 2006 awards, which were made on a competitive basis, were based on needs and priorities identified by BJS, the amount requested, the quality of the applying state's records, the anticipated impact the proposed improvements would have on availability of records throughout the national system, the extent to which the state had fulfilled goals of previous NCHIP awards and the technical feasibility of the state's proposal.

Information about NCHIP is available on the BJS website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/nchip.htm>. For specific information about a state program, contact the individual listed at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/nchipadd.htm>

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics programs, please visit the BJS website at: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs).

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and an office: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed strategy and OJP's American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov).

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