

The Impact of Federal Budget Cuts on State and Local Public Safety

Results from a Survey of Criminal Justice Practitioners

Federal Public Safety Funding at Historically Low Levels

Over the past two years, federal support for the criminal justice assistance grant programs through the Department of Justice has been decreased by 43 percent.

Some programs have been eliminated; others have taken deep cuts. For instance, since FY2012 the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program has been cut by 34 percent, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring grants by 44 percent, the in-person drug treatment supported by the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners (RSAT) program by 67 percent, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) by 75 percent, the juvenile delinquency prevention initiatives funded by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Part A (JJDP A) by more than 50 percent, and reimbursement to state and local governments through the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) by 27 percent.

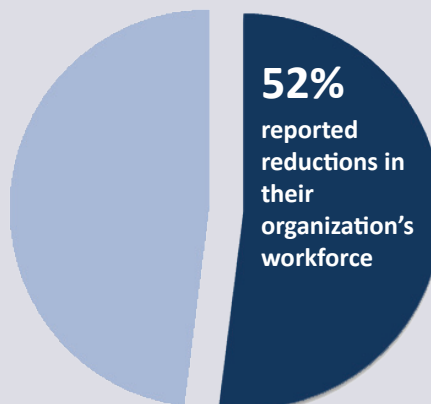
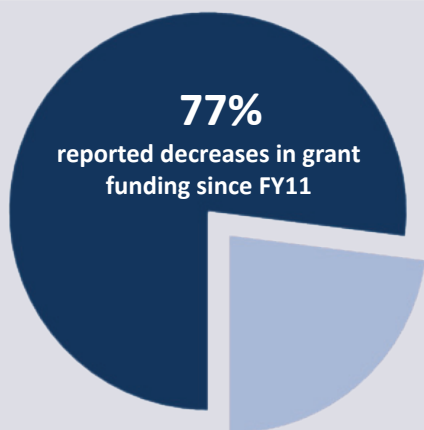
These programs are at historically low levels of funding. The additional deep cuts mandated by sequestration could leave the federal-state-local public safety partnership virtually unfunded by FY2021.

Surveying the Field

To better understand the impact of cuts already enacted and cuts anticipated by sequestration, the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) and the Vera Institute of Justice conducted a survey of state and local criminal justice stakeholder organizations in the summer of 2012. A total of 714 organizations responded to the survey, the majority representing state and local law enforcement agencies. The survey asked respondents to describe the impact of recent cuts in their communities.

What the Survey Found

More than three-quarters (77 percent) of respondents reported that their grant funding has decreased since FY11. Of those, nearly half (44 percent) reported a decrease in funding of at least one-third. Also, 14 percent reported that their grant funds had been cut by more than half. In addition, 52 percent of respondents reported a reduction in their organization's workforce by, on average, 3.4 full-time equivalent employees. **It is important to note that at the time of the survey, the FY12 grant funding had not yet been released. Therefore, these responses reflect only cuts in FY11 funding.**



“Continued funding cuts would jeopardize the County’s ability to operate a juvenile assessment center. Therefore, law enforcement officers who currently have a 15 minute wait time to drop a detained youth off would become responsible for supervising each detain youth themselves for up to six hours.”

~ a respondent from Sarasota, FL

“The drug and meth problem are at epidemic levels and the resources to combat the scourge are diminishing which makes it difficult to fight and morale is very low. The finger holding the dike is getting worn down....”

~ a law enforcement respondent from KY

“Our program lost one of our victim services programs and employees who served approximately 80 sexual assault survivors each year.”

~ a respondent from OH

“Without the task force, only street officers who stumble onto drug operations will be [able to] put forth [the effort] to stop production of meth and distribution of drugs in my district.”

~ a respondent from the 11th Judicial District, OK

Respondents were also asked to provide examples of how reductions in funding have affected their ability to protect public safety in their communities.

- Recent federal and state budget cuts have forced the **Tucson** Police Department to eliminate 194 sworn positions and 40.5 civilian positions “in a wide range of positions including dispatch, crime scene investigation, evidence, records and finance.” In Tucson, “[sworn and] civilian authorized strength is now at levels not seen in over 10 years.” In addition, federal budget cuts determine whether Tucson can deploy equipment and technology that provide “safer, more effective law enforcement for the Tucson metropolitan area.”
- A district attorney’s office in **Pennsylvania** reports that two “major grants” support three of its 25 positions, including a STOP Prosecutor and two pretrial positions. “If these were eliminated, the resulting docket delay would adversely impact the system as a whole, operationally and financially.”
- Sarasota County, **Florida**, has been forced to eliminate three positions at its juvenile assessment center providing mental health assessments and case management for youth. “Continued funding cuts would jeopardize the County’s ability to operate a juvenile assessment center. Therefore, law enforcement officers who currently have a 15 minute wait time to drop a detained youth off would become responsible for supervising each detain youth themselves for up to six hours. It would gravely impact the public safety due to the loss of patrol officers during this time. In addition, youth would not receive appropriate assessments and referrals to services.”
- A law enforcement respondent from **Kentucky** said that personnel and equipment needs have been cut in half over the past year due to lack of funding. “The drug and meth problem are at epidemic levels and the resources to combat the scourge are diminishing which makes it difficult to fight and morale is very low. Officers are overworked.... The impact is affecting society in general.... It’s hard to estimate the devastation these cuts will make to an already horrible condition. The finger holding the dike is getting worn down....”
- An anonymous respondent wrote: “Reductions have caused the loss of two drug task forces. Arrests have dropped 8.9 percent from FY 2010. Asset seizure value dropped 36 percent. Marijuana drug removals dropped 56.7 percent from FY 2010. Drug convictions dropped 13.2 percent from FY 2010 and was likely driven by having 11.5 percent less cases referred for prosecution.”
- A respondent in **Ohio** wrote: “Our program lost a victim services program and employees who served approximately 80 sexual assault survivors each year. The program provided in-depth assistance to survivors navigating law enforcement investigations. Decreased funding has also drastically diminished our ability to provide recovery resources to survivors seeking services in local hospitals.”
- From the 11th Judicial District of **Oklahoma**: “Mine is a task force of two officers from two agencies, one donated, one paid by the grant. Further cuts will make the program inoperable. Without the task force, only street officers who stumble onto drug operations will be [able to] put forth [the effort] to stop production of meth and distribution of drugs in my district.”

- A respondent from **Pennsylvania** wrote, “As budget cuts occur other services are reduced pushing them by default onto local police further stressing police resources. Drug Task Force funding was reduced in 2011-2012 effectively shutting down undercover and proactive drug investigations for a period of 2 months. This permitted open drug sales to increase, increased retail thefts, burglary and other thefts all impacting police operations as resources are shifted to address the expanding demands. This takes away from other police services and reduces preventative patrol.”

- The Wilton Manors Police Department in **Florida** reports that after the withdrawal of Byrne JAG funds, “our Agency continues to address crime trends with minimal funding and resources.... We continue to contest crime in our City the best way possible given the limited resources, but it simply is just not enough. Victims and citizens do not want to hear this and hear that their safety is being jeopardized due to a lack of funds and resources.”

- A Prosecuting Attorney in **West Virginia** says, “We live in an economically distressed area which is plagued by prescription drug abuse. This has affected everything from truancy to property and violent crimes. We do not have local funding to provide services to victims, rehab or supportive services to defendants, or to assist with our overwhelming caseload. Therefore, many needs are just going unmet because I have to focus on the prosecution, abuse and neglect and similar aspects of my job. We do not have the staff or money to perform outreach or other services, including prevention. Our victim advocate program is totally funded by grant. We will not be able to have this program without federal funding.”

- A drug and violent crimes task force in **Tennessee** writes, “We are a small drug and violent crime task force. We have already reduced our work force by a third due to cut backs in funding. Our district has seen an increase in prescription drug abuse, methamphetamine related crimes and violent crime in the last two years. This should mean that we should be increasing our law enforcement efforts. To put it simply, further funding cuts [of] 7 to 9 percent yearly will eventually put us out of business. Public safety should be our utmost concern. There will be no one in our district to step up and do the job that we have been doing.”

- After noting that Carroll County, **Ohio**, “has had an influx of workers and families relating to the gas and oil industry,” the Sheriff’s Office reports that “[w]e are a small rural county with a population of 28,000 before the gas and oil industry boom hit. The reduction in funding removed two officers from road patrol, leaving at times only one officer on a shift to patrol 388.59 square miles. Incident reports since 2010 have increased by 32.3 percent.... We are already understaffed and should there be a loss of grant monies, we could lose at least one full time road deputy and one dispatcher by the end of this year. Although it may be too early for accurate stats relating to crime stemming from the gas and oil industry in Ohio, other states such as Pennsylvania, North Dakota and Wyoming have experienced increases in drunk driving, bar fights, domestic violence and thefts in their small towns similar to our community of Carrollton. Loss of personnel will cause lengthier response times and diminish overall security for county residents.”

- Federal and local budget cuts have caused layoffs in a county in rural **Ohio** prompting “jail wing closures [causing] a hardship on the Court system, because

“Drug Task Force funding was reduced in 2011-2012 effectively shutting down undercover and proactive drug investigations for 2 months. This permitted open drug sales to increase, increased retail thefts, burglary and other thefts all impacting police operations as resources are shifted to address the expanding demands.”

~ a respondent from PA

“We continue to contest crime in our City the best way possible given the limited resources, but it simply is just not enough. Victims and citizens do not want to hear this and hear that their safety is being jeopardized due to a lack of funds and resources.”

~ a law enforcement respondent from Wilton Manors, FL

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~ a drug taskforce respondent from TN

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~ a respondent from Carroll County, OH

"[t]here are often times when only one car is on patrol in the County.... Due to a lack of patrol officers, we have seen an increase in the number of burglaries, shootings, homicides as well as fatal accidents.."

~ a respondent from OH

"[a] steady reduction of overall federal funding has resulted in [the] elimination of a very successful financial crimes/exploitation of elderly investigative and prosecution unit."

~ a respondent from the District Attorney's Office in OK

"Residents also don't like seeing in the newspaper or on the news that inmates are being released because there is no housing available."

~ a respondent from rural OH

Judges had to determine who they could keep in jail and who to release based on their limited bed capacities." Also, the "road patrol was decreased 17 percent.... [and] these officers have not been replaced to date." Further, "[t]here are often times when only one car is on patrol in the County.... Due to a lack of patrol officers, we have seen an increase in the number of burglaries, shootings, homicides as well as fatal accidents. This office even had to implement an online reporting system, since officers are not available to respond to non-emergency calls for service. The public gets frustrated when an officer cannot respond to their call for assistance or when they have to wait for two to three hours for an officer to respond because he is on the other side of the County. Residents also don't like seeing in the newspaper or on the news that inmates are being released because there is no housing available. These issues will only be magnified with a lack of grant funding."

- The Groveland, **Florida**, Police Department writes "[o]ur small agency uses Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants to purchase much needed equipment for our officers to do their jobs.... Without the vest grants, we might not be able to purchase current bullet proof vest for our officers. Officers would either have to purchase their own vests as done in the past or they would be wearing vests that had expired for some time."

- The Lawton, **Oklahoma**, District Attorney's Office reports that "[a] steady reduction of overall federal funding has resulted in [the] elimination of a very successful financial crimes/exploitation of elderly investigative and prosecution unit. This direct award from BJA has served a very rural and large two county area of southwest Oklahoma for the last three years."

- Since FY 2010, the Byrne JAG grant to Miami-Dade County, **Florida**, has been reduced nearly 50 percent. This funding has supported projects "aimed at addressing problems of illegal drug use, gang activity, domestic violence, and improving the functioning of the criminal justice system" supporting residential substance abuse treatment, domestic violence overlay services, crime prevention awareness, juvenile assessment, and Miami-Dade Schools Police services, as well as criminal justice records improvement, School Resource Officers and domestic violence services for an average of 28 local municipal police departments. The County reports that "[t]he negative impact of these reductions has been extensive [and] programs have been eliminated and/or curtailed" and services to the community cut dramatically. "The overriding impact of this funding loss and reduction to the Miami-Dade County community is decreased public safety."

- The Artemis Center has had to curtail court advocacy services for domestic violence victims in several court jurisdictions in Montgomery County, **Ohio**. The agency has lost three victim advocates, or 15 percent of its workforce and cut services to 400 clients, or about 10 percent its population served. The Center reports that in many jurisdictions, it now has "virtually no presence." Further, under sequestration the Artemis Center could be forced to eliminate five more victims advocate positions, translating into a loss of services for 1,500 victims of crime. "If projected cuts in government funding proceed, we anticipate that our court advocacy program will be greatly curtailed, if not virtually eliminated. That means we will not be able to offer hands-on assistance in accompanying victims to court proceedings and in assisting clients to obtain protection orders.... We an-

icipate not being able to do any court outreach which impacts our ability to assist in protecting victims of domestic violence.”

- A judicial district drug task force serves four counties in rural Middle Tennessee with two agents serving all four counties. “The budget cuts over the past few years have tremendously halted undercover drug investigations...which can impact middle to major drug dealers.”
- An anonymous respondent wrote, “As things progress, it appears that grant funding will continue to be cut, causing the loss of more agents, and eventually the death of many task forces across the state. These agents are already out there working more hours than they should at a high-risk job for less pay than should be allowed. Even then, many of these agents wouldn’t trade their job for anything simply due to the fact that they want to make a difference in our communities. The communities in our district will directly be affected by the cuts in that our agents are not working within the communities with local enforcement to increase productivity in the fight on drugs. In addition, agents will not have the time to conduct drug prevention and awareness classes to students, civic groups and the general public. It is hard to see a program that has become such a vital part of the criminal justice system be continually cut to the point that task forces will eventually be non-existent.”
- The Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, District Attorney’s Office sums up the cascading effect across the justice system when funding is cut back: “The problem with the justice system and funding cuts is that people still require, by law, the provision of many of the services available from government agencies. The number of cases, for example, processing through the District Attorney’s office in a year may not decrease; however, the speed at which a case is processed WILL decrease if those numbers continue to climb. A victim of a violent crime thus may wait even longer for a case to be resolved, and a defendant may sit even longer in jail pending its resolution. These things drive up costs to taxpayers because jails are tax supported and also discourage, by lack of available funding, the exploration and implementation of rehabilitative responses to anti-social and criminogenic behavior. Programming such as drug courts, electronic monitoring, victim advocates, and the like, are critical to ensure this system is able to operate in a manner through which justice is served equally.”
- An anonymous respondent wrote, “The reductions will eliminate our task force. It will leave [our rural area of the state] open for drug dealers to operate without the fear of being caught. Because we are the main agency that works drug enforcement in our area.”
- An anonymous respondent wrote, “[Our rural] Drug Task Force is the ONLY law enforcement agency that services the 60,000 citizens that inhabit [our district] in regard to organized drug interdiction and investigation as well as serving as a key resource to local law enforcement agencies in investigation of violent crimes. The ‘cuts’ sustained since 2010 have left only funds that are necessary to pay personnel expenses for the two full time task force investigators. There is NO money for equipment, drug buy money, fuel or vehicle maintenance, vests, bullets, or any other required accessory for the officers to do their job.”

*“The budget cuts over the past few years have **tremendously halted undercover drug investigations...which can impact middle to major drug dealers.***

~ a drug taskforce respondent from TN

*“If projected cuts in government funding proceed, we anticipate that our court advocacy program will be greatly curtailed, if not virtually eliminated. **That means we will not be able to offer hands -on assistance in accompanying victims to court proceedings and in assisting clients obtain protection orders.**”*

~ a respondent from Montgomery County, OH

*“The reductions will eliminate our task force. It **will leave [our rural area of the state] open for drug dealers to operate without the fear of being caught.**”*

~ anonymous

*“We anticipate our recidivism rates would increase greatly and, without any services or support to offer juveniles and adults, **we fear the prison cycle will spiral out of control.**”*

~ a respondent from PA

*“These agents are **already out there working more hours than they should at a high-risk job for less pay than should be allowed.**”*

~ anonymous

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*“The cost of treating youth is 10 times the cost of the prevention services lost for these youth. Reductions in federal funding greatly impact our ability to serve at-risk youth in the community.... **Federal reductions now will only increase costs to federal entities and other public organizations in the future.**”*

~ anonymous

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~ a respondent from PA

- An anonymous respondent wrote, “As federal funds have declined and will obviously continue to do so it reduces our means to leverage and/or diversify funding to sustain discretionary programs and programming. In the business of juvenile and adult detention, we are losing and stand to lose more alternatives to incarceration and programs that provide evidence based and/or treatment programming. These are the less costly programs to avoid more costly and lengthy stays in detention. And these are the programs that help to reduce recidivism. For example, cutting residential community corrections beds that serve as a last chance to avoid prison for probation violators has resulted in a dramatic increase in prison admission and more jail time. Bottom line, the less costly and more effective alternatives to incarceration are closed and demand for prisons and jails goes up. It is a bad deal for taxpayers but the more progressive alternatives are discretionary and jails and prisons are all that is left...Sustaining prevention and early intervention programming for juveniles as well as effective rehabilitative programming is critical to public safety. Evidence based programming changes lives away from a criminal behavior. It is not costly but without encouragement through shared funding we are losing the means to sustain it.”

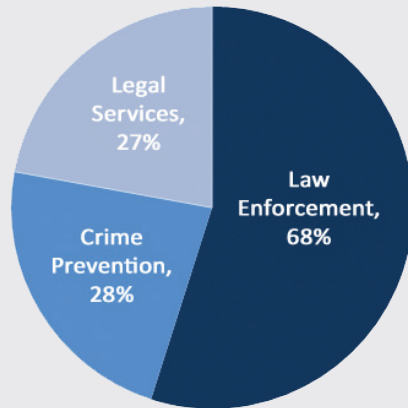
- An anonymous respondent from **New York** wrote, “The real impact over time will be the lack of funding to support new approaches in criminal justice. The reductions in crime over the past 20 years have resulted from new approaches and research that was supported with federal grant dollars. Lack of funding will seriously curtail these efforts and diminish local communities’ ability to respond to new crime problems.”

- An anonymous respondent wrote, “[We have] served 50 less at risk youth since budget cuts in 2010. This puts youth at higher risk of entering the juvenile justice system dropping out of school or abusing substances. The cost of treating youth is 10 times the cost of the prevention services lost for these youth. Reductions in federal funding greatly impact our ability to serve at-risk youth in the community. These reductions, coupled with reductions in local public funding have an impact well into the future for our community. Less youth served in diversion and prevention programming will only serve to dramatically increase the cost of providing more intensive and more expensive out of home services in the future. Federal funds directed at diverting youth from formal court processing and out of home placement pay significant dividends both financially and practically in reducing crime. Federal reductions now will only increase costs to federal entities and other public organizations in the future. Short sighted budget cuts now will cost governments more, by a factor of ten, in coming years.”

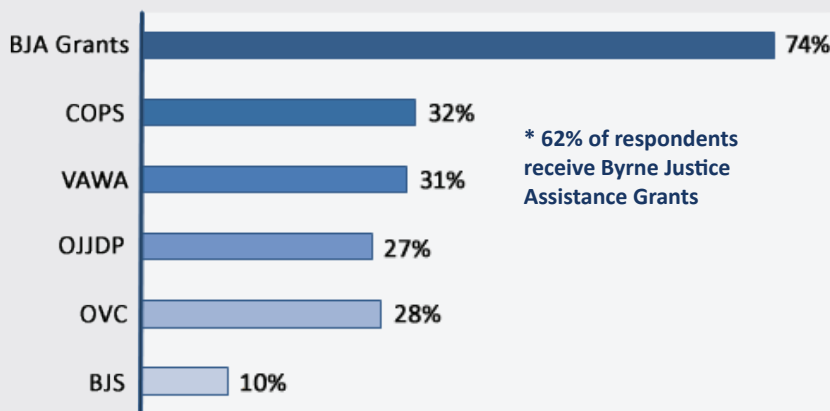
- An anonymous respondent from **Pennsylvania** wrote, “The reduced funds have also taken their toll on our partnering and community outreach. In a couple of instances, we have needed to expand or enhance community services to juveniles and adults and the local non-profits have not partnered with us - stating that they simply do not have the resources to bring new/improved services to our target population. This means many of our juveniles and needy adults remain unserved and are unable to attain self-sufficiency and are at high-risk of returning to the criminal justice system... We anticipate our recidivism rates would increase greatly and, without any services or support to offer juveniles and adults, we fear the prison cycle will spiral out of control - impacting not only the offender, but also their family.”

About the Criminal Justice Community Survey

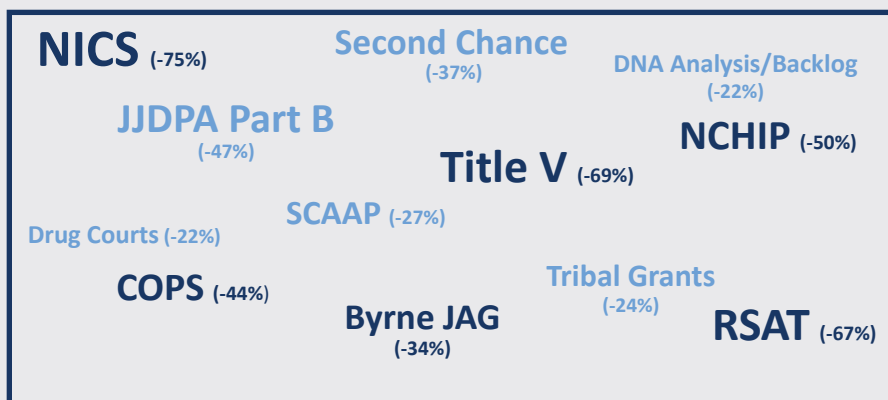
A total of 714 organizations responded to the online survey, the majority of which represented state and local law enforcement agencies. Other respondents included non-profit service providers, and prosecution, probation and corrections officials.



Respondents reported receiving grants from the Department of Justice agencies, shown in the graph below:



Overall, funding for the justice assistance grant programs have been cut by 43 percent since FY10. The chart below shows the magnitude of cuts to a number of key programs.



What is Sequestration?

In August 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act (BCA) which sought to put a framework in place for reaching a high-level agreement on overall federal spending and deficit reduction. The new law raised the debt ceiling, set caps on discretionary spending for FY12 and FY13 at levels almost \$1 trillion lower than FY10, and mandated the trigger of automatic, across-the-board cuts – known as sequestration – if a deficit reduction plan was not enacted.

Unless Congress enacts a comprehensive deficit reduction plan, or amends the existing law, all domestic discretionary programs, including the justice assistance grant programs will be reduced by 8.2 percent in FY13, according to a report released by the Office of Management and Budget on September 14, 2012. Further, the BCA will force reductions of the caps on discretionary spending, at a level of roughly equal magnitude, in subsequent years through FY21.

In the summer of 2012, the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) and the Vera Institute of Justice conducted an informal nationwide online survey of 714 state and local criminal justice stakeholder organizations. The questionnaire's purpose was to gather information from a wide range of jurisdictions about the impact of budget cuts, both already enacted, and anticipated cuts that would result from sequestration. This document is a summary of self-reported responses.



The Vera Institute of Justice is a research and policy organization that combines expertise in research, demonstration projects, and technical assistance to help leaders in government and civil society improve the systems people rely on for justice and safety.



The National Criminal Justice Association represents state, tribal, and local governments on crime prevention and crime control issues. Its members represent all facets of the criminal and juvenile justice community, from law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, defense courts, victim-witness services and education institutions to federal, state, and local elected officials. As the representative of state, tribal, and local criminal and juvenile justice practitioners, the NCJA works to promote a balanced approach to communities' complex public safety problems.