

## NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

### Agencies Incorporated Almost All Leading Practices When Assessing Grant Programs That Could Prevent or Address Delinquency

#### Why GAO Did This Study

Federal and other studies have noted that exposure to violence and substance abuse make Native American youth susceptible to becoming involved with the justice system. GAO was asked to examine federal and tribal efforts to address juvenile delinquency and the barriers tribes face in doing so.

This report examines (1) federal financial assistance targeting tribes that could prevent or address juvenile delinquency; (2) the extent to which federal agencies assess the performance of selected grant programs and incorporate leading practices; and (3) the juvenile delinquency challenges tribes report facing. GAO identified relevant grant programs during fiscal years 2015 through 2018—the most recent data available when GAO began the review. GAO analyzed documents and interviewed agency officials to determine how they assessed grant program performance and conducted interviews with 10 tribes and two tribal consortia to discuss challenges with delinquency.

#### What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations, including that relevant HHS and Interior offices develop a process to assess the reliability of tribal grantee performance information and that an Interior office take steps to alert grantees that are late in submitting progress reports. Interior concurred with the two recommendations. HHS disagreed with GAO's recommendation. GAO clarified the recommendation to HHS and continues to believe it is warranted.

View [GAO-20-600](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin, 202-512-8777, or [GoodwinG@gao.gov](mailto:GoodwinG@gao.gov)

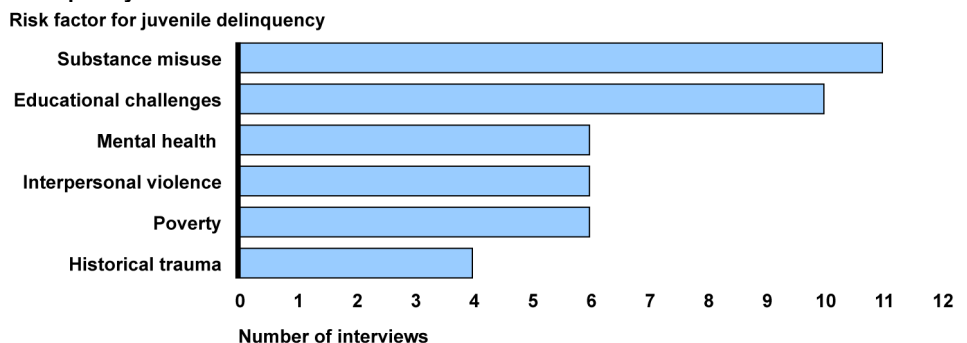
#### What GAO Found

The Departments of Justice (DOJ), Health and Human Services (HHS), the Interior (Interior), and Education (Education) administered at least 38 grant programs from fiscal years 2015 through 2018 that could have helped prevent or address delinquency among Native American youth. These agencies made about \$1.9 billion in awards to grantees through these programs during this period.

These agencies incorporated almost all of the leading practices GAO identified for performance measurement or program evaluation when assessing the performance of selected grant programs. For example, HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) incorporated 13 of the 14 leading practices for performance measurement but did not fully assess grantee data reliability for one of its programs. By developing a process to assess the reliability of grantee data contained in the annual performance reports that tribal recipients submit, ACF could obtain further assurance that it has an accurate representation of grantee performance. GAO also found that Interior's Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) did not conduct formal data reliability checks on performance data that grantees report and did not always collect performance reports from grantees in a timely manner for one of its programs. By developing a process to assess the reliability of a sample of grantee performance data and taking steps to alert grantees when they are late in submitting performance reports, BIE could better ensure that grantees are complying with the terms and conditions of the grant program and better understand how the program and its grantees are performing.

Officials in all 12 interviews with tribes or tribal consortia GAO interviewed cited risk factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency in their communities.

**Number of Interviews in Which Tribal Officials Cited Risk Factors Contributing to Juvenile Delinquency**



Source: GAO analysis of interviews with officials from federally recognized tribes and tribal consortia. | GAO-20-600

Note: The figure includes the most common risk factors tribal officials cited for juvenile delinquency.

While tribal officials cited restrictions placed on federal grant funding, difficulty communicating with program staff, and challenges hiring and retaining staff as barriers to implementing federal programs, they also identified promising practices, such as executing culturally relevant programs, for preventing or addressing juvenile delinquency.