

Report in Brief

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Report No. A-02-19-02004

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Why OIG Did This Audit

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG Act) of 2014 added new requirements for States receiving funding from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to conduct comprehensive criminal background checks on staff members and prospective staff members of child care providers every 5 years. Criminal background check requirements apply to any staff member who is employed by a child care provider for compensation or whose activities involve the care or supervision of children or unsupervised access to children.

Our objective was to determine whether New Jersey's monitoring of child care providers ensured provider compliance with State requirements related to criminal background checks established under the CCDBG Act.

How OIG Did This Audit

Our audit covered 3,169 licensed child care centers and registered family homes that received CCDF funding during Federal fiscal year 2018. We used geographic area and total CCDF funding received to select 15 licensed child care center providers and 15 registered family home providers. In total, we reviewed supporting documentation for 649 individuals who were current employees or household members at 30 different child care provider locations.

New Jersey's Monitoring Did Not Ensure Child Care Provider Compliance With State Criminal Background Check Requirements at 9 of 30 Providers Reviewed

What OIG Found

New Jersey's monitoring did not ensure provider compliance with State requirements related to criminal background checks at 9 of 30 child care provider locations we reviewed. We found that 26 of 649 individuals did not obtain 1 or more of the required criminal background checks.

These errors occurred because despite periodic inspections that include a 100-percent review of employee or household member criminal background check documentation, it is still possible for providers to hire individuals or have household members in the home without the State's knowledge during the time between these inspections. Therefore, New Jersey would not be aware that background checks had not been conducted on prospective employees or new household members until an inspection was performed. In addition, New Jersey would not know to follow up with providers on current employees or household members who are required to renew their criminal background checks.

What OIG Recommends and New Jersey's Comments

We recommended that New Jersey conduct all required criminal background checks for the 26 individuals we reviewed who did not have the required checks, develop a system that alerts it when criminal background checks need to be completed for prospective and current employees and household members, and continue to work with the Administration for Children and Families to reach substantial compliance with criminal background check requirements.

In written comments on our draft report, New Jersey did not indicate concurrence or nonconcurrence with our recommendations; however, it described actions it had taken or planned to take to address them. Specifically, New Jersey stated that it had followed up on the 26 individuals cited in our report and these individuals have received the required background checks. New Jersey also stated that two systems had been developed that allowed compliance with background check requirements to be monitored. Finally, New Jersey stated it had taken steps to ensure that all family child care providers and household members had completed required background checks and was continuing to work toward implementing National Sex Offender Registry Checks and inter-State checks for licensed child care centers. We commend New Jersey for taking appropriate corrective actions in response to our recommendations.