

Report in Brief

Date: November 2021

Report No. A-03-20-00252

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 that receive 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 the District of Columbia's monitoring process ensured provider compliance with District requirements related to criminal background checks established under the CCDBG Act.

How OIG Did This Audit

Our audit covered 113 child development centers and child development homes that received CCDF funding during District fiscal year 2018. We used geographic area, total CCDF funding received, and total capacity to select 15 child development centers and 15 child development homes providers. In total, we reviewed supporting documentation for 541 household members and employees at 30 child care provider locations.

The District of Columbia's Monitoring Did Not Ensure Child Care Provider Compliance With Criminal Background Check Requirements at 7 of 30 Providers Reviewed

What OIG Found

The District's monitoring process did not ensure provider compliance related to criminal background checks for 7 of the 30 child care providers (55 of the 541 individuals requiring background checks) we reviewed. In response to our audit, the District took action and completed background checks for 52 of the 55 individuals. The errors we found occurred because: (1) providers did not send the in-State child abuse and neglect (Child Protection Register) check results to the District, (2) District law did not allow Child Protection Register check results to be sent directly to the District unless the individual was found not to be suitable for employment, and (3) processing delays resulted in incomplete Federal Bureau of Investigations fingerprint checks and inter-State checks. To ensure the safety of children at these child care providers, the District needs to strengthen its process for conducting criminal background checks for all individuals who supervise or have routine unsupervised contact with children.

What OIG Recommends and District Comments

We made multiple recommendations, including that the District: (1) conduct all required criminal background checks for the three individuals we reviewed who did not have the required checks and whose background checks were not resolved during our audit, and (2) work with District legislators to allow Child Protection Register check results to be sent directly to the District without requiring a signed and notarized consent form from the individual whose records are to be released. The detailed recommendations are in the report.

In written comments on our draft report, the District concurred with our recommendations and provided information on actions that it had taken or plans to take to address them. Specifically, the District stated that it has completed the criminal background checks for the three individuals noted in our report and plans actions that include: (1) proposing a legislative solution for obtaining access to Child Protection Register check data and (2) implementing monitoring actions to ensure provider compliance with background check requirements.