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# REPORT

## Fiscal Year 2004 Report on the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program

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The Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement grant program provides funding to crime laboratories and medical examiner offices through a two-part process consisting of "Base" and "Competitive" funding. The Coverdell program allows crime laboratories and medical examiner offices to use these grant funds for expenses related to laboratory facilities, personnel, equipment, computerization, supplies, accreditation, certification, and education and training.

According to the Coverdell Act, seventy-five percent (75%) of the total program amount must be awarded to states through State Administering Agencies (SAAs) based on individual state population. These "Base" awards are dispersed as formula grants to all eligible SAAs who apply for funding. State Administering Agencies from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories are eligible to apply for "Base" funding.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of the total program amount must be awarded directly to states and/or units of local government. These "Competitive" awards are not required to pass through a State Administering Agency; instead they are dispersed directly to the applicants in those states or units of local government.

There were no funds appropriated for the Coverdell program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2001. In FYs 2002 and 2003, \$5,000,000 was appropriated each year for the Coverdell grant program.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, which was signed by the President on January 23, 2004, appropriated \$10,000,000 for the FY 2004 Coverdell program. A congressionally mandated rescission and Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs Management and Administration expenses reduced the available appropriation to \$9,508,587. At the end of FY 2003, \$89,060 in Coverdell funding remained unallocated. That amount was added to the FY 2004 available appropriation, bringing the total amount available for the Coverdell program in FY 2004 to \$9,597,647.

In accordance with the Coverdell Act, \$7,131,440.25 (75% of the FY 2004 available appropriation) was allocated to the "Base" funding portion and \$2,466,206.75 was allocated to the "Competitive" funding portion. The "Competitive" allocation comprised 25% of the available appropriation plus the \$89,060 in FY 2003 funds.

In response to the FY 2004 Coverdell Grant Program Announcement, NIJ received 183 applications for funding. Of that amount, 30 were from SAAs requesting their portion of the "Base" funding and 131 were from units of local government seeking a portion of the "Competitive" funding. Additionally, 22 states applied for both "Base" and "Competitive" funding.

The 153 applications for "Competitive" funding were reviewed by an independent panel made up of subject-matter experts from the forensic science community. After reviewing the proposals, the panel made funding recommendations. These recommendations were forwarded to the Director of the National Institute of Justice. Due to funding constraints and the competitive process, the Director funded 35 proposals.

Prior to the close of FY 2004, the National Institute of Justice made a total of 77 Coverdell awards. These consisted of 42 "Base" awards to State Administering Agencies, 26 "Competitive" awards to units of local government, and 9 combination "Base" and "Competitive" awards to SAAs.