

What Does the GAO Report Really Say about Job Corps Safety?

Putting Job Corps Significant Incidents Data in Context

On June 22, 2017 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, *Job Corps: Preliminary Observations on Student Safety and Security Data*. The report provides data on the number and type of Job Corps-related incidents over a ten-year period.

According to the GAO report, there were 49,836 Job Corps significant incidents reported between January 1, 2007 and June 30, 2016. During that same period, Job Corps served 539,000 students. The 49,836 Job Corps significant incidents over 10 years is a data point that, without further analysis and context, does little to help understand the true state of Job Corps center safety. By placing incident data in context, Job Corps operators, staff, and policy makers can make more informed and appropriate decisions to ensure a safe living and learning environment for students.

Job Corps reports on a broad range of safety, health, and facility incidents involving staff and visitors, and students while not under center supervision

Job Corps policy requires Job Corps centers to report on 20 different categories of incidents to the National and Regional Offices of Job Corps (see figure 1). Centers are required to report these incidents involving Job Corps students, regardless of whether they occurred on the center, offsite under center supervision, or when the student is away from center supervision. These include incidents in which Job Corps students were either a victim or a perpetrator. They also include incidents at the center involving staff or any other person who comes onto a Job Corps center.

Figure 1. Comparison of Job Corps Incident Reporting Requirements to Those of Other Youth Programs

Job Corps Reporting Requirements		
<i>Must report incidents involving enrolled students on and off campus; all staff, students, and visitors on campus</i>		
1-Alcohol-related incident	2-Arrest	3-Assault
4-Breach of security/safety	5-Danger to self or others	6-Death
7-Drug-related incident	8-Hospitalization	9-Inappropriate sexual behavior
10-Incident attracting potentially negative media attention	11-Incident involving law enforcement involvement	12-Incident involving a missing minor student
13-Incident involving illegal activity (not covered by other categories)	14-Incident threatening to close down center/disrupt center operations	15-Theft of damage to center, staff or student property
16-Motor vehicle accident	17-Safety/hazmat	18-Serious illness/injury
19-Sexual assault	20-Missing person	
College and University Crime Reporting Requirements (Clery Act)		
<i>Must report incidents occurring on school-controlled property and adjacent public property</i>		
1-Murder	2-Negligent manslaughter	3-Sex offenses
4-Robbery	5-Aggravated assault	6-Burglary
7-Motor vehicle theft	8-Arson	9-Arrests/disciplinary referrals for weapons, drugs, and alcohol
10-Hate crimes	11-Domestic/dating violence; stalking	
YouthBuild Reporting Requirements		
<i>Must report incidents occurring on the worksite</i>		
1-OSHA injury and illness report (i.e. injuries resulting in death, days away from work, restricted work, medical treatment beyond first aid, or loss of consciousness)		

Sources. GAO Report, GAO-17-596T; Clery Center, Clery Act Requirements, Crime Reporting Geography and Availability; DOL YouthBuild Program Manual

The broad categories of incidents Job Corps centers report, and the fact that they must report incidents involving students while not under center supervision, makes Job Corps unique among institutions that serve youth. For example, the Clery Act requires colleges and universities to report on criminal offenses but only for incidents that occur on school-owned or school-controlled property.¹ YouthBuild, a federal Department of Labor program serving the same population as Job Corps, requires grantees to only report incidents related to worksite injuries or illness, as required by OSHA. These include injuries resulting in death, days away from work, restricted work, medical treatment beyond first aid, or loss of consciousness.²

The most commonly reported Job Corps significant incidents include instances of medical issues, facility issues, and incidents involving students not under center supervision

The GAO report provides data on the number of Job Corps significant incidents by category and the percent that occurred onsite versus offsite. The report also includes an appendix with the definition of each significant incident category. A close reading of these definitions shows that not all Job Corps significant incidents involve criminal or malicious actions by students. Significant incidents include incidents in which there is no perpetrator, such as significant health conditions involving students, staff, or visitors on center, damage to Job Corps property due to adverse weather, and motor vehicle or other accidents involving *any individual* on a Job Corps campus. They also include motor vehicle accidents involving students while they are on leave from the center.

While significant incident categories also include incidents of student violence, these incidents affect a relatively small percentage of Job Corps students. Figure 2 shows the prevalence of incidents occurring on center among the 539,000 students served by Job Corps during the 10-year report period. The table includes the five most commonly reported significant incident categories as well a few less commonly reported incidents.

Serious Illness/Injury on Center Affected Two Percent of Job Corps Students

Serious illness/injury was the largest incident category in the GAO report. During the 10-year report period, there were 14,194 reported serious illness/injury incidents reported, 12,529 of which occurred onsite (a prevalence of 2.32 percent among the 539,000 students served). These types of incidents include “any diagnosis of injury, illness, or disease which is serious or widespread among students and/or staff.”³ This includes any outbreak of a communicable disease (such as the flu), emergency room visits, or hospitalization for any purpose. It’s important to note that all Job Corps students receive a complete physical examination upon arrival, including laboratory screenings.⁴ A diagnosis of a serious illness or disease would be a reportable significant incident, even though it is a necessary part of identifying student health problems and ensuring the care they need.

Assault on Center Affected One Percent of Job Corps Students

During the 10-year report period, there were 9,299 incidents categorized as assault, 7,616 of which occurred onsite (a prevalence of 1.41 percent among the 539,000 students served). This category covers a wide range of incidents involving staff or students, including fighting, hazing, bullying, or any physical contact with the intent to cause harm. All of these incidents are zero-tolerance infractions, resulting in immediate expulsion and a permanent ban from Job Corps if the perpetrator is a student.

Figure 2. On-Center Prevalence of Significant Incidents among 539,000 Job Corps Students from January 1, 2007 To June 30, 2016, by Selected Categories

Category	Examples	On-Center Incidents	Prevalence
Most Commonly Reported Categories			
Serious Illness/Injury	Any injury, illness, or disease which is serious or widespread among students and/or staff, including any outbreak of a communicable disease (such as the flu), emergency room visits, or hospitalization for any purpose.	12,529	2.32%
Assault	Any physical contact with the intent to cause harm, including fighting, hazing, or bullying	7,616	1.41%
Drug-related Incidents	Incidents involving any student or staff found in possession drugs or charged with a drug offense, or; the discovery of drugs on center	6,073	1.13%
Theft or Damage to Center, Staff, or Student Property	Any incident involving the destruction, theft, or attempted theft of property; natural disasters, such as hurricane, flooding, earthquake, water main break, power failure, or fire	3,158	0.59%
Breach of Security/Safety	Wide range of incidents determined to threaten the safety of staff, students, and property from verbal threats, to possession of a weapon, to unauthorized access of center property	2,417	0.45%
Less Commonly Reported Categories			
Alcohol-related incident	An incident involving the discovery of alcohol on center, or involving any student found in possession of alcohol or charged by local law enforcement agencies with illegal alcohol consumption or possession	1,022	0.19%
Motor Vehicle Incident	Motor vehicle accidents involving any Job Corps student, on duty staff member, and/or center-owned vehicle	790	0.15%
Sexual Assault	Any alleged non-consensual sexual contact involving students on or off center	548	0.10%
Death	Any enrolled student, regardless of whether on duty or off duty; any on-duty staff member; any individual while on a Job Corps center	61	0.01%
Homicide	Any enrolled student, regardless of whether on duty or off duty; any on-duty staff member; any individual while on a Job Corps center	4	0.001%

Source. GAO report: Job Corps Preliminary Observations on Student Safety and Security Data

Drug-Related Incidents on Center Affected One Percent of Students

There were 6,541 drug-related incidents in the 10-year GAO report period, 6,073 of which occurred onsite (a prevalence of 1.13 percent among the 539,000 students served). These incidents involve any

staff or students found in possession of drugs or charged by law enforcement with illegal use, possession, or distributions of controlled substances. It also includes the discovery of drugs on center. Because marijuana possession is prohibited on Job Corps centers, this also includes possession of marijuana in centers located in states where marijuana possession is legal.

Theft or Damage to Center, Staff, or Student Property Affected Less than One Percent of Students

Of the 5,883 incidents under this category, 3,158 occurred onsite (a prevalence of .59 percent among the 539,000 students served). This is a broad category that also include natural occurrences that threaten to close down a center, such as tornados, hurricanes, flooding, water main break, or power failure.

Breach of Security/Safety on Center Affected Less than Half a Percent of Students

There were 2,857 incidents under this category during the 10-year report period, of which 2,417 occurred onsite (a prevalence of .45 percent among the 539,000 students served). This category includes incidents that threaten the security and safety of center students, staff, and property. It encompasses a wide range of incidents from verbal threats, to possession of a weapon, to unauthorized access of center property.

Less Commonly Reported Job Corps Significant Incidents

Job Corps Protects Youth from Risks Associated Motor Vehicles

Youth of Job Corps age are at a high risk for motor vehicle accidents and Job Corps provides a safe environment to mitigate the risk to young people. During the 10-year GAO report period there were 2,540 motor vehicle incidents reported, of which only 790 (31 percent) occurred onsite. These involve any vehicle accident involving staff, students, or center-owned vehicles.

Job Corps Protects Youth from the Risks of Alcohol

Youth of Job Corps age are also at a high risk for problems related to alcohol use and abuse. The 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 60 percent of college students 18 to 22 drank in the past month, and two thirds of those binge drank.⁵ Alcohol issues on Job Corps campuses are far less prevalent. The GAO report found just 1,882 alcohol-related incidents, of which 1,022 occurred onsite (a prevalence of .19 percent among the 539,000 students served).

Job Corps campuses are alcohol-free environments and violations of this policy are promptly dealt with. Reported onsite incidents involving alcohol include the possession of alcohol by any students, staff, or visitors to the center, including those of legal drinking age. It also includes students returning to the center from approved leave with alcohol in their systems.

Job Corps Sexual Assault Rates Significantly Lower than National Averages for Youth

While sexual assault was not among the most commonly reported significant incidents in Job Corps, it is a serious issue in our country and youth are especially vulnerable. Women 18-24 enrolled in postsecondary education are 3 times more likely to be victims of sexual assault than the general population of women.⁶ Male postsecondary students in the US are also at an increased risk for sexual assault—as much as five times more than youth not enrolled in postsecondary education.⁷

In Job Corps, there were 1,186 allegations of sexual assault reported over the 10-year report, less than half (548) were alleged to have occurred onsite. During the 10-year period the rate of alleged sexual

assaults at Job Corps sites was 1.02 per 1,000. From 1995 to 2013, the sexual assault rates for postsecondary students nationally was 6.1 per 1,000 for females and 1.4 per 1,000 for males.⁸

[Job Corps Mortality Rates Significantly Lower than National Averages for Youth](#)

The GAO reported 265 deaths between 2007 and 2016. The overwhelming majority of Job Corps-related deaths (204) occurred offsite. This include deaths of students on summer or winter break, weekend leave, unauthorized leave, or non-residential students after the training day ends. Unfortunately, the GAO report does not specify which offsite deaths occurred when students where under Job Corps supervision and which ones did not.

Out of the 265 reported Job Corps-related deaths over a ten-year period, 61 occurred on Job Corps centers. These deaths include students, staff, and visitors while on center for any cause, including for pre-existing medical conditions. While even one death is too many, there is evidence that the environment Job Corps centers provide to some of the nation’s most vulnerable youth saves lives. During the 10-year report period, the Job Corps on-center mortality rate was 11.3 per 100,000. That’s 6.5 times lower than the national average for 16- to 24-year-old youth from 2007 to 2015.⁹

[Job Corps Homicide Rates Significantly Lower than National Averages for Youth](#)

Unfortunately, even the most secure federal facilities—such as our military installations—are not immune from tragic acts of violence, as evidenced by the shootings at Fort Hood and the Washington Navy Yard. There have been 65 Job Corps homicides in the GAO’s report period. However, all but four of those homicides (94 percent) occurred away from Job Corps centers. The most recent CDC data show that the homicide rate for 16- to 24-year-olds nationally was 11.97 per 100,000 from 2007 to 2015—16 times higher than the Job Corps on-center homicide rate of .74 per 100,000.¹⁰

¹ Clery Center (2017). *Clery Act Requirements, Crime Reporting Geography and Availability*. Retrieved from <https://clerycenter.org/policy-resources/the-clery-act/>

² DOL YouthBuild Program Manual. *Chapter 1: Getting Started As a New DOL YouthBuild Program*. Page 13. Retrieved from <https://youthbuild.workforcegps.org/>

³ ETA definitions of significant incident categories are taken from the June 22, 2017 GAO report: *Job Corps Preliminary Observations on Student Safety and Security Data*, Appendix I Categories of Incidents in the Significant Incident Reporting System (SIRS).

⁴ Job Corps Policy and Requirements Handbook. *Exhibit 6-4, Job Corps Basic Health Care Responsibilities*.

⁵ SAMHSA. 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Table 6.88B—Alcohol Use in the Past Month among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status and Demographic Characteristics: Percentages, 2013 and 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHDetTabs2014/NSDUH-DetTabs2014.htm#tab6-88b>

⁶ RAINN. *Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics. Women Ages 18-24 Are at an Elevated Risk of Sexual Violence*. Retrieved <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence>

⁷ U.S. Justice Department, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2014). *Rape and Sexual Assault Victimization Among College-Age Females, 1995-2013. Table 3: Rape and sexual assault victimization, by sex of victim and post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013*. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rsavcaf9513.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2015.

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Nations Center for Injury Prevention and Control. *Fatal Injury Reports, 1999-2015*.