

The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (OIG) today released a report examining the Department of Justice's (DOJ) handling of sex offenders in the Federal Witness Security (WITSEC) Program. The OIG identified significant concerns with the management of the Program and found that the DOJ has not taken sufficient steps to mitigate the threat by Program participants, including sex offenders, who commit crimes after being terminated from the Program.

Today's report evaluates the DOJ's admission and vetting of sex offenders into the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) WITSEC Program; its handling and monitoring of sex offenders who participate in the DOJ WITSEC Program; and its procedures for notifying states, local municipalities, and other law enforcement agencies when sex offenders in the DOJ WITSEC Program are relocated.

The OIG's findings include:

- In July 2013, at the onset of this audit, the DOJ did not know how many sex offenders were in the DOJ WITSEC Program. By July 2014, the Department had identified a total of 58 sex offenders who were in the Program at some point. This included 10 individuals who were convicted of sex offenses prior to admittance, 10 individuals who were convicted of a sex offense while in the Program, and 38 individuals who were convicted of a sex offense after they were no longer in the Program. The sex offenses committed by these individuals included crimes such as rape or sexual assault of children. In August 2014, the DOJ informed us that at least 4 individuals, in addition to those above, who were convicted of sex related offenses were current Program participants and had received a new name. We believe that the DOJ generally did not use adequate safeguards to protect and notify the public and law enforcement about the risk posed by sex offender participants in the Program.
- While we were provided with USMS directives and procedures that had been marked as "under review" since 2007, the DOJ did not have finalized policies in place to address the unique concerns regarding relocation, employment, and residency of sex offenders participating in the DOJ WITSEC Program until September 2014, after we recommended that they implement such policies.
- According to DOJ officials, thousands of individuals who received a legal name change subsequently left the DOJ WITSEC Program either voluntarily or involuntarily. We identified a loophole in the Program process that leaves law enforcement agencies unnecessarily uninformed about these individuals and unable to utilize all available tools to perform their duties. As noted in our report, the DOJ has acknowledged this issue and is working to address it.

Since the initiation of this audit in July 2013, the DOJ has taken several steps to improve its management and oversight of the DOJ WITSEC Program in response to OIG recommendations, including finalizing additional policies and procedures addressing the provision of relocation

services to sex offenders, the handling and monitoring of sex offenders who are Program participants, and the oversight and management of terminated Program participants.

This is the OIG's second report in 2 years assessing the DOJ's WITSEC Program. In a May 2013 interim report, the OIG found inadequate monitoring of known or suspected terrorists admitted to the WITSEC Program, and a failure to share essential information about WITSEC Program participants with the Terrorist Screening Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Today's report discusses several recommendations that the DOJ has addressed and makes two additional recommendations to the DOJ to improve its oversight and management of the Federal Witness Security Program. The DOJ agreed with both recommendations.

An unredacted version of this report is being provided to relevant Congressional oversight committees, as well as to DOJ leadership offices.

The public version of today's report, which contains information that is redacted because the DOJ determined the information is law enforcement sensitive or "for official use only," can be found on the OIG's website at the following link: [www.justice.gov/oig/reports/2015/a1510r.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/oig/reports/2015/a1510r.pdf).