

WisDOJ: AG Kaul announces 2023-2025 crime fighting budget

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MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul released his 2023-2025 Crime Fighting Budget request for the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), targeting smart investments to fight crime by funding law enforcement, to keep kids safe, and to combat the opioid epidemic.

“My crime fighting budget proposes investing in law enforcement, protecting kids, and combatting the opioid and meth epidemics,” said Attorney General Kaul. “In the next state budget, it’s critical that the legislature finally ensures that communities have the resources they need for public safety.”

In the last two budgets, important investments have been made in public safety. But there is still work to be done to make up for decades of underfunding of the criminal justice system, and it is vital that progress be made on achieving greater public safety.

Wisconsin DOJ has endured difficult operating budgets during that period due to both the pressure COVID-19 placed on revenue collection and the constraints provisions in 2017 Wisconsin Act 369 had on Wisconsin DOJ’s ability to access previously available resources which could have been used to support Wisconsin DOJ operations and other criminal justice partners. Wisconsin DOJ has gained efficiencies and made-do with less while maintaining a high level of service to the people of Wisconsin. However, there is much more that needs to be done to make Wisconsinites safer, and it will require significant investments. Highlighted below are the types of investments Wisconsin DOJ is requesting to help make Wisconsin safer.

Fighting Crime by Funding Law Enforcement

Wisconsin DOJ is requesting additional funding for law enforcement to help make Wisconsin safer. While the primary source for funding law enforcement agencies is local government—and shared revenue is critical to this funding, more must also be done directly at the state level to support their critical work.

To assist in investigating crime, Wisconsin DOJ requests adding 19 additional special agent and criminal analyst positions to bolster the services DCI provides. The Wisconsin State Crime Laboratories also play a critical function in the state's criminal justice system. Wisconsin DOJ requests additional 16 DNA analysts, toxicologists, and crime scene response specialists to help meet the demand for these services.

Wisconsin DOJ is also requesting 2 additional violent crime prosecutors to expand Wisconsin DOJ's capacity to take on more criminal prosecutions.

Wisconsin DOJ is requesting funding for a grant program to support law enforcement recruitment, retention, and wellness. Locally driven and locally specific programs spur innovation and directly respond to the unique safety needs of the communities they serve. Additionally, Wisconsin DOJ requests funding to provide grants to local agencies to support community policing and prosecution, a known, effective strategy for safer communities.

We are also again requesting to stabilize funding for law enforcement training reimbursements. It is critical that we work towards a long-term solution for ensuring the necessary funding is available for law enforcement training programs such as basic new recruit, annual recertification, and specialized training.

Keeping Kids Safe

The Office of School Safety (OSS) at Wisconsin DOJ was created in 2018 following the school shooting in Parkland, Florida. OSS was initially charged with distribution of \$100 million of school safety grants, but has since expanded services to schools, including the Speak Up, Speak Out School Resource Center and confidential tip line. These resources have already provided a critical resource for protecting our kids statewide. For example, OSS' swift action to engage law enforcement and school officials has helped to initiate welfare checks for kids in danger of harming themselves and thwart threats of school violence. Federal grant funding has supported OSS' innovative and successful expansion, but that funding will run out by the end of 2023. State funding is best to ensure that Wisconsin can continue

being proactive to keep our kids safe and this critical resource can continue.

Within Wisconsin DOJ's Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), special agents, criminal analysts, and victim specialists work tirelessly to fight internet crimes against children (ICAC). The DCI-led ICAC Task Force investigated 4,534 CyberTips and made 468 arrests in 2021 and CyberTips have increased over 400 percent since 2013. Wisconsin DOJ requests additional special agent and criminal analyst positions to best aid local agencies while reviewing the dramatic increase in tips and providing prevention education.

Combatting the Opioid Epidemic

Wisconsin is experiencing the nationwide increase in overdose deaths, in part due to strains caused by the pandemic, but also because of the increasing variety and prevalence of incredibly deadly fentanyl analogues. More resources are needed to respond to this growing public safety challenge. Wisconsin DOJ is requesting additional toxicology staff for the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratories. It is critical that our scientists have the resources necessary to keep pace with the opioid epidemic as it continues to evolve.

The Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) program administered by Wisconsin DOJ makes a huge difference in the lives of many Wisconsinites struggling with substance use disorder by helping them get needed treatment. This program, which has had strong bipartisan support, has grown many times over in the last several years, without corresponding financial support for administration. Funding for program evaluation and analysis as well as technical assistance to the 86 TAD-funded treatment courts or diversion programs in 53 counties and three tribal nations has not kept up with program expansion. As such, Wisconsin DOJ is requesting additional resources for the TAD program to help with technical assistance, review, and evaluation. These investments will help ensure that the program continues to be successful and cost-effective.

Wisconsin DOJ's full request can be found [here](#).

This press release can be found [here](#).