

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Federal Bureau of Prisons



# ABOUT THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS



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The Federal Bureau of Prisons was established in 1930 to provide more progressive and humane care for federal inmates, to professionalize the prison service, and to ensure consistent and centralized administration of the 11 Federal prisons in operation at that time. Today, the Bureau includes 121 institutions, 6 regional offices, a Central Office (headquarters), and 26 offices that oversee residential reentry centers. The regional offices and Central Office provide oversight and administrative support to the institutions and offices.

The Bureau is responsible for the care and custody of more than 208,000 federal inmates, as of spring 2015.<sup>1</sup> About 81 percent of these inmates are confined in federal correctional institutions or detention centers, and the remainder are held in secure privately managed or community-based facilities and local jails under contract with the Bureau.

The Bureau protects society by confining offenders in prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure, and by providing inmates with programs and services to assist them in becoming proactive law-abiding citizens when they return to their communities.

The Bureau’s most important resource is its staff. All Bureau staff are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that creates and maintains respect for the agency, the Department of Justice, the Federal Government, and the law.



*Federal Correctional Institution Pekin, Illinois*

<sup>1</sup> The inmate population varies daily. For up-to-date population information, please visit [www.bop.gov](http://www.bop.gov).

## **Growth of the Federal Inmate Population**

Most of the challenges affecting the Bureau today relate to the historical increase in the inmate population. At the end of 1930 (the year the Bureau was created), the agency operated 15 institutions with just over 13,000 inmates. In 1940, the Bureau had grown to 24 institutions with 24,360 inmates. Despite minor fluctuations, the number of inmates did not change significantly between 1940 and 1980 (when the population was 24,252). However, during this same period, the number of institutions almost doubled (from 24 to 44) as the Bureau gradually moved from operating large institutions confining inmates of many security levels to operating smaller facilities confining inmates with similar security needs.

In the 1980s the inmate population grew rapidly. The Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 abolished parole and reduced good time. Mandatory minimum sentencing provisions were enacted in 1986, 1988, and 1990. From 1980 to 1989, the inmate population more than doubled from 24,500 to almost 58,000. During the 1990s, the population more than doubled again, reaching 136,000 at the end of 1999. By the end of 2013, the Bureau's population climbed to almost 220,000, and then the population began to decline, for the first time in more than 34 years. At the end of 2014, the Bureau had 5,149 fewer inmates than at the beginning of the year. Population declines are projected to continue for the next few years.

## **Institution Security**

The Bureau operates institutions at four security levels (minimum, low, medium, and high) and has one maximum-security prison for the less than one percent of inmates who require that level of security. It also has administrative facilities, such as pretrial detention centers and medical referral centers, that have specialized missions and confine offenders of all security levels. The Bureau also classifies its institutions based on the level of medical services readily available, as care levels 1-4.

The characteristics that help define the security level of an institution are perimeter security (such as fences, patrol officers, and towers), level of staffing, internal controls for inmate

movement and accountability, and type of living quarters (for example, cells or open dormitories). The Bureau's graduated security and medical classification levels allow staff to assign an inmate to an institution in accordance with his/her individual needs. Thus, inmates who are able to function with relatively less supervision, without disrupting institution operations or threatening the safety of staff or other inmates, can be housed in lower security level institutions.

Regardless of the specific discipline in which a staff member works, all employees are "correctional workers first." This means everyone is responsible for the security and good order of the institution. All staff are expected to be vigilant and attentive to inmate accountability and security issues, to respond to emergencies, and to maintain a proficiency in custodial and security matters, as well as in their particular job specialty. This approach allows the Bureau to operate in the most cost-effective manner with fewer correctional officers and still maintain direct supervision of inmates.

The Bureau relies on security technologies to help ensure the safety of staff and inmates. Recently new technologies have included whole body imaging devices to detect contraband (including cell phones) and sophisticated walk-through metal detectors, thermal fencing, and thermal camera sensors. These technologies have significantly reduced contraband. Additionally we have provided staff additional equipment, such as oleoresin capsicum spray, to further enhance their safety.

## **Inmate Management**

Staff are key to effective inmate management. Constructive and frequent interaction and communication between staff and inmates are critical to maintaining accountability and ensuring security. Bureau staff are expected to talk with inmates and to be receptive to their concerns. To facilitate direct supervision, the Bureau limits structural barriers (such as bars and grilles) where possible and locates staff offices near areas where programs and services are delivered. Staff circulate regularly through all areas of the institution, continually interacting with inmates. This helps

normalize the environment within the institution, with staff serving as law-abiding role models, and places staff in a better position to observe and respond to inmate behavior. Many institutions also rely on observation through video surveillance cameras to augment direct staff supervision.



*Correctional workers performing routine duties*

Unit Management is a hallmark of the Bureau’s inmate management philosophy. Unit management gives inmates direct daily contact with the staff who make most of the decisions impacting their daily lives. These staff members (the unit manager, case manager, and correctional counselor), have offices in inmate living units, thereby facilitating inmate access to staff. This also facilitates staff awareness of significant inmate concerns and potential problems.

Unit staff are directly responsible for inmates housed in their units in programs designed to meet their needs. Unit staff receive input from other employees (such as work supervisors, teachers, and psychologists) who work with the inmate, and meet with him/her on a regular basis to develop, review, and discuss work assignments, program opportunities, and progress, as well as any other needs or concerns. These regularly-scheduled meetings do not preclude inmates from approaching a member of the unit team or any other appropriate staff member to discuss particular issues.

# Inmate Programs

The Bureau’s philosophy is that preparation for reentry to society begins on the first day of incarceration. Accordingly, the Bureau provides many programs, designed to assign inmates and address their needs such as substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, education, anger management, parenting and more.

Prison work programs provide inmates an opportunity to acquire marketable occupational skills, as well as acquire a sound work ethic and habits. Medically able inmates are required to work some. For some individuals, this represents their first employment experience. Work assignments provide on-the-job training similar to what would be received in the community. For example, inmates work as clerks, landscapers, and electricians. Many work assignments are linked to vocational training programs, and may lead to formal apprenticeships.

## 1. *Federal Prison Industries (FPI) and Vocational Training*

Federal Prison Industries (FPI), trade name UNICOR, is one of the Bureau’s most important correctional programs. It has been proven to substantially reduce recidivism and operates without congressional appropriation. Inmates who participate in FPI are also substantially less likely to engage in misconduct.



*Inmates working in Federal Prison Industries factory*

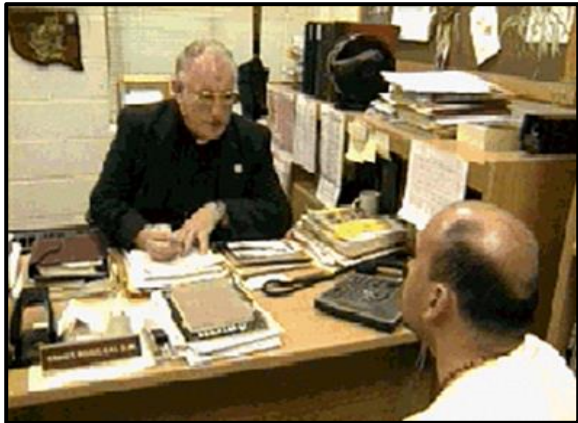
## 2. *Education*

The Bureau provides education and recreation programs individually: GED, Spanish GED, English As A Second Language,

Adult Continuing Education, Post-Secondary, Parenting, Vocational, Apprenticeships, and Release Preparation. Inmates who participate in education programs for a minimum of six months are less likely to recidivate when compared to similar non-participating inmates. Recreation programs help teach inmates to make constructive use of leisure time to reduce stress, improve their health and develop hobbies they enjoy. These programs keep inmates constructively occupied and contribute to positive lifestyles and self-improvement.

**3. Inmate Faith-Based Programs**

Federal prisons offer a variety of faith-based services and programs. Inmates are granted permission to wear or retain various religious items, and accommodations are made to observe holy days. Bureau facilities offer religious diets that meet the dietary requirements of various faith groups, such as the Jewish and Islamic faiths. Most institutions have sweat lodges to accommodate the religious requirements of Native Americans. Religious programs are led or supervised by staff chaplains, contract spiritual leaders, and community volunteers. Chaplains oversee inmate worship services and self-improvement programs, and provide pastoral care, spiritual guidance, and counseling. The Bureau offers inmates the opportunity to participate in its Life Connections Program, a residential reentry program as well as Thresholds, the non-residential version of our program.



*Inmate programs include spiritual counseling*

#### *4. Residential Substance Abuse Treatment*

Residential drug abuse treatment programs (RDAPs) are offered at more than 77 Bureau institutions, providing treatment to more than 18,000 inmates each year. Inmates in RDAP are housed in a separate housing unit that operates a modified therapeutic community. RDAPs provide intensive half-day programming, 5 days a week, for 9-12 months. The remainder of each day is spent in education, work skills training, and other programs. The program also includes a community based component that inmates complete while in a RRC or home confinement. Inmates who complete RDAP are 16 percent less likely to recidivate and 15 percent less likely to have a relapse to drug use within 3 years after release. Nonviolent offenders who complete the program are eligible to have their sentence reduced by up to one year. Other drug programs offered by the Bureau are the Nonresidential Drug Treatment Program, Challenge Program, and Spanish RDAP.

#### *5. Pro-Social Values Programs*

Encouraged by RDAP's positive results, the Bureau implemented a number of other programs, including the Secure Mental Health Treatment Program, which treats inmates with serious mental illness and histories of significant violence; the Challenge Program for high security inmates, which treats inmates with a history of substance abuse or mental illness; the Resolve Program for female inmates, which treats inmates with trauma-related mental illnesses; the BRAVE (Bureau Rehabilitation and Values Enhancement) Program for younger, newly-designated offenders, which addresses anti-social attitudes and behavior; the Skills Program for cognitively-impaired inmates, which treats issues with adapting to prison and the community; Mental Health Step Down Units, which provide treatment for inmates with serious mental illnesses releasing from psychiatric hospitalization; the Sex Offender Treatment Program for inmates with a sex offense history; and the STAGES (Steps Toward Awareness, Growth, and Emotional Strength) program for inmates with severe personality disorders, who have a history of behavioral problems or self-harm. As resources allow, the Bureau has expanded these programs to address the significant demand for these services. The Bureau has found that these programs significantly reduce institution misconduct.



## *6. Programs for Female Offenders*

Female offenders are considered a specialty population and the Bureau continues to refine strategies on the most effective initiatives to assist women with their reentry and self-improvement needs. Female offenders differ from male offenders in some significant ways. For example, women are more likely to have histories of trauma and physical or sexual abuse, have higher rates of certain chronic and acute medical conditions, and have greater levels of combined mental health and substance use disorders. Because of the high rates of trauma and other related mental health needs in the female offender population, women's facilities have a greater number of psychologists on staff. The Resolve Program consists of evidence-based protocols individually tailored to help women heal from trauma. This cognitive-behavioral therapy program, designed to help and empower women, treats more than 2,000 women annually.

Females are also more likely than men to have been the primary caregivers of their children prior to incarceration and to have a history of dysfunctional relationships, both of which pose additional challenges to reentry. The Bureau recognizes the importance of the bond experienced between mother and child, and offers programs for women who will give birth while incarcerated. In the Mothers and Infants Together (MINT) Program, eligible pregnant inmates who agree to participate are transferred to a community-based center during the final trimester of pregnancy, and remain with the child during the critical early months. Video visitation, another initiative which helps female inmates connect with their children and social support network, is being implemented at all female institutions.

## **Preparing Inmates for Release**

Near the end of their sentence, inmates participate in the Release Preparation Program, which includes a series of classes regarding daily living activities in the community including employment, banking, resume writing, job search strategies, and job retention. It also includes presentations by representatives from community-based organizations that help former inmates find employment and training opportunities after release.

The Bureau helps inmates maintain ties with their family and friends through visiting, mail, email and the telephone. The Bureau specifically encourages inmates to maintain and develop bonds with their children through parenting programs that include specialized activities such as day camps and workshops.



*Family activities during Children's Day events*

The Bureau's Inmate Transition Branch helps inmates prepare release portfolios that include a resume, education and training certificates and transcripts, diplomas, and other significant documents needed to secure employment. Many institutions hold mock job fairs to allow inmates to practice job interview techniques and expose community recruiters to the skills available among inmates.

### **Community-Based Confinement and Community Activities**

The Bureau places inmates in Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs) for the last few months of their sentence to facilitate a successful transition to the community. These centers provide a structured, supervised environment and support in job placement, counseling, financial management assistance, and other services. They make it possible for inmates to gradually rebuild ties to the community while living in a structured environment. Inmates in RRCs are required to work and to pay a subsistence charge of 25 percent of their income to offset the cost of confinement. Some inmates are placed in home confinement either directly from prison or after spending time in an RRC. They serve this portion of their

sentences at home under strict schedules, curfew requirements, telephonic monitoring, and sometimes electronic monitoring.

## **Community Involvement with Inmates and the Bureau**

Community volunteers help inmates adapt to imprisonment and prepare for their return to the community. Volunteers provide a variety of services, such as spiritual counseling, assistance with family and marriage issues, substance abuse counseling, education and vocational training, and health education.

Most institutions have Community Relations Boards that facilitate information exchange between the facility and the local community, advancing public awareness and an understanding of any issues of concern at the prison. All Federal prisons have arrangements with state and local law enforcement agencies and other emergency services in the rare event of an escape or other security concern. Bureau institutions are involved in a variety of joint training activities with state, local, and other Federal law enforcement agencies; they often allow these agencies to use training areas in their institutions.



**Note:** The figures contained in this publication are current with the time published. For updated figures and more information, please visit our website at: [www.bop.gov](http://www.bop.gov).

Published by:  
Federal Bureau of Prisons  
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Washington, DC 20534

*June 2015*