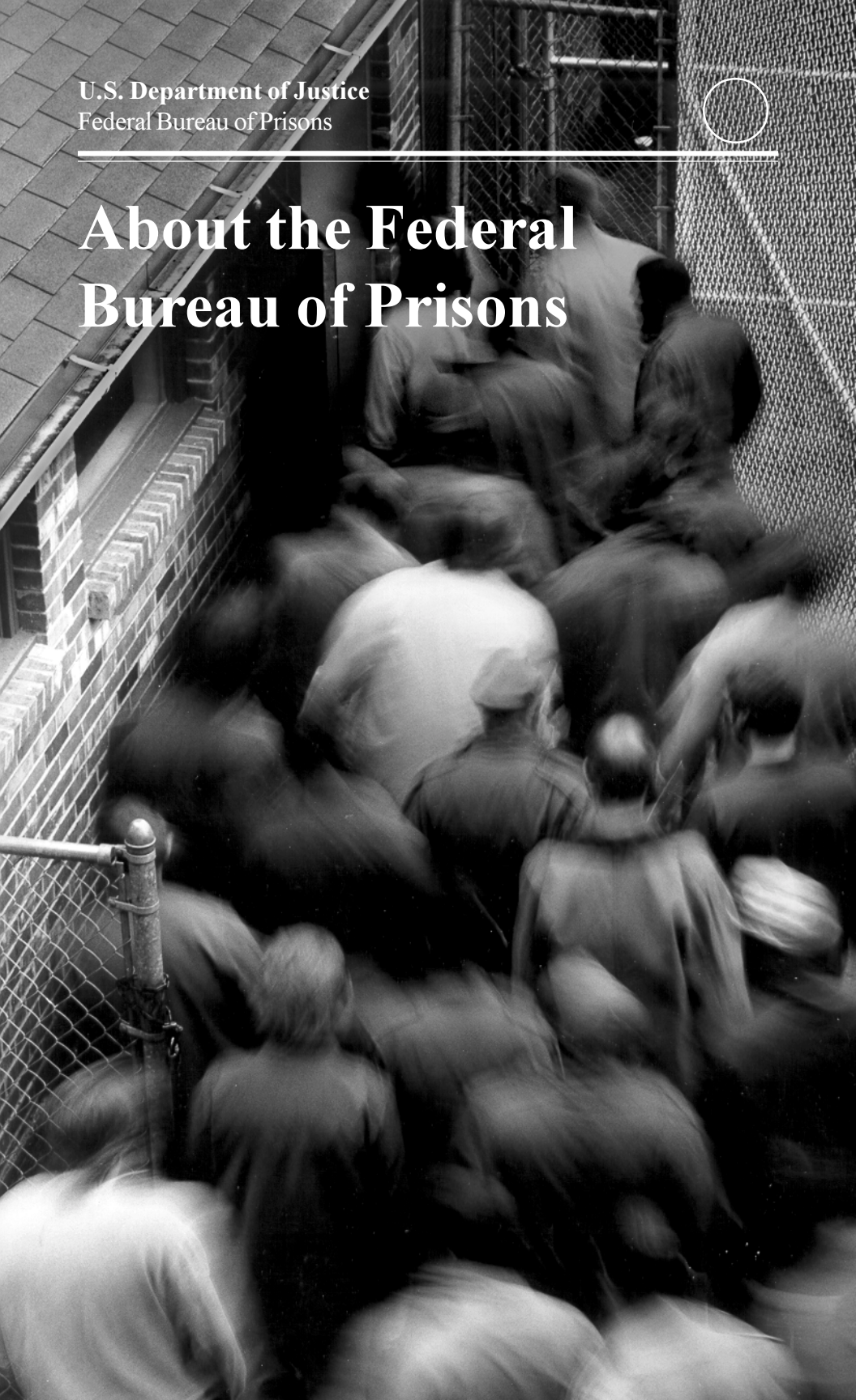


U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Prisons



# About the Federal Bureau of Prisons



## About the Federal Bureau of Prisons

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 consists of 100 institutions, 6 regional offices, a Central Office (headquarters), 3 staff training centers, and 28 community corrections offices. The regional offices and the Central Office provide administrative oversight and support to the institutions and community corrections offices. Community corrections offices oversee community corrections centers and home confinement programs.

The Bureau is responsible for the custody and care of approximately 154,000 Federal offenders. Approximately 130,000 of these inmates are confined in Bureau-operated correctional institutions or detention centers. The remainder are confined through agreements with State and local governments and through contracts with privately-operated community corrections centers, detention centers, prisons, and juvenile facilities.

The Bureau's most important resource is its staff. The approximately 33,000 employees of the Bureau of Prisons ensure the security of Federal prisons, provide inmates with needed programs and services, and model mainstream values. The Bureau's employees help the agency meet its obligation to protect public safety and provide security and safety to the staff and inmates in its facilities.

The Bureau protects public safety by ensuring that Federal offenders serve their sentences of imprisonment in institutions that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure. The Bureau helps reduce future criminal activity by encouraging inmates to participate in a range of programs that are proven to help them adopt a crime-free lifestyle upon their return to the community.



*Federal Correctional Institution, Phoenix, Arizona.*

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

Most of the challenges affecting the Bureau today relate to the agency's growth. At the end of 1930 (the year the Bureau was created), the agency operated 14 institutions for just over 13,000 inmates. In 1940, the Bureau had grown to 24 institutions with 24,360 inmates. Except for a few fluctuations, the number of inmates did not change significantly between 1940 and 1980 (when the population was 24,252); however, 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, more cost-effective facilities that each confined inmates with similar security needs.

The 1980's brought a significant increase in the number of Federal inmates -- the result of Federal law enforcement efforts and new legislation that dramatically altered sentencing in the Federal criminal justice system. Most of the Bureau's growth since the mid-1980's has been the result of the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 (which established determinate sentencing, abolished parole, and reduced good time) and mandatory minimum sentences enacted in 1986, 1988, and 1990. From 1980 to 1989, the inmate population more than doubled, from just over 24,000 to almost 58,000. During the 1990's, the population more than doubled again, reaching approximately 136,000 at the end of 1999 as efforts to combat illegal drugs and illegal immigration contributed to significantly increasing conviction rates.

The Bureau is projecting dramatic population increases for the next several years because it appears that current Federal law enforcement efforts will continue to be effective. Through construction of new institutions, expansions at some existing facilities, and limited contracting for the housing of lower-security inmates, the Bureau will meet the challenge posed by the projected population growth.

## **Institution Security**

The Bureau ensures institution security through a combination of physical features, security technologies, the classification of inmates based on risk factors, and direct staff supervision. The Bureau operates institutions at four security levels (minimum, low, medium, and high) to meet the various security needs of its diverse inmate population and has one maximum-security prison for the less than 1 percent of the 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 characteristics that help to define the security level of an institution are perimeter security measures (such as fences, patrol officers, and towers), the level of staffing, the internal controls for inmate movement and accountability, and the type of inmate living quarters (such as cells or open dormitories). The Bureau's graduated security scheme allows staff to assign an inmate to an institution in accordance with the inmate's individual security

needs. Inmates who are able to function with relatively little supervision, without disrupting institution operations or threatening the safety of staff, other inmates, or the public, 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 that 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.

Although architecture and technological innovations help the Bureau maintain the safety and security of its institutions, the most important way to maintain accountability, ensure security, and manage inmate behavior is direct supervision of inmates by staff. The Bureau has continued to add technological innovations to increase the physical security of institutions. Nonetheless, to facilitate the direct supervision of inmates, the Bureau has eliminated structural barriers (such as bars and grilles) between staff and inmates wherever possible. In addition, many staff offices are located near the areas where programs and services are delivered. Staff circulate freely and constantly through all areas of the institution, continually interacting with inmates. This promotes a more normalized environment within the institution, with staff serving as law-abiding role models, and places staff in a better position to observe inmate behavior.

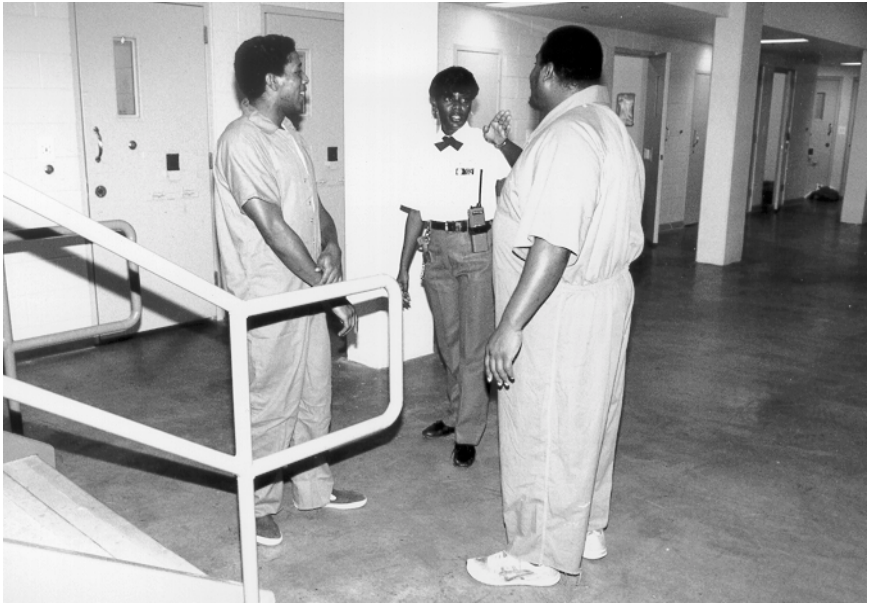
## **Inmate Management**

Staff are the most important part of inmate management. Constructive interaction and frequent communication between staff and inmates are the most important ways to ensure accountability, security, and positive inmate behavior. The Bureau encourages staff to talk with and be available to inmates and to be receptive to inmate concerns.

Unit management is one hallmark of the Bureau’s inmate management philosophy. Unit management gives inmates direct daily contact with the staff who make most of the decisions about their daily lives. These staff members (the unit manager, case manager, and correctional counselor) have offices in inmate living units. This results in improved inmate access to staff and greater staff access to inmates, providing staff with an awareness of significant inmate concerns and potential problems.

The unit staff is directly responsible for the program involvement of inmates in the unit. Unit staff receive input from other employees involved in an inmate’s progress (such as work supervisors, teachers, and psychologists) and meet with the inmate on a regular basis to develop, review, and discuss the work assignment and programs the inmate should be involved in, 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 at any time to discuss their particular issues.

Bureau staff are the inmates' primary role models during their incarceration, and the Bureau emphasizes employee ethics, responsibility, and standards of conduct. The Bureau expects its employees to conduct themselves in a manner that creates and maintains respect for the agency, the Department of Justice, the Federal Government, and the law. Bureau employees are expected to avoid situations that involve conflicts of interest with their employment and to uphold and comply with the ethical rules and standards that govern their professions, as well as the laws and regulations that ensure institution security and protect the safety of inmates and the general public.



*Housing unit officer makes routine rounds.*

Another significant way the Bureau maintains security and the safety of staff and inmates is by keeping inmates constructively occupied. Meeting the challenges posed by an increasing and changing inmate population involves more than just providing bedspace, meals, and health care. Experience has shown that keeping inmates busy and productive in appropriate correctional programs and activities is critical to managing a safe and secure prison, as well as helping to ensure public safety. Correctional programs and activities help prepare inmates for their return to the community and they reduce inmate idleness and the stresses associated with living in a prison.

## **Inmate Programs**

While safety and security are paramount, the Bureau also has a responsibility to provide inmates with opportunities to participate in programs that can provide them with the skills they need to lead crime-free lives after release. The Bureau provides many self-improvement programs, including work in prison industries

and other institution jobs, vocational training, education, substance abuse treatment, religious observance, parenting, anger management, counseling, and other programs that teach essential life skills. The Bureau also provides other structured activities designed to teach inmates productive ways to use their time.

Work is the Bureau's most important correctional program. Prison work programs teach inmates occupational skills and instill sound and lasting work habits and work ethics in offenders. All sentenced inmates in Federal correctional institutions are required to work (with the exception of those who for security, educational, or medical reasons are unable to do so). Most inmates are assigned to an institutional job such as a food service worker, orderly, plumber, painter, warehouse worker, or groundskeeper. Approximately 25 percent of the Bureau's eligible sentenced inmates work in Federal Prison Industries factories. They gain job skills through specific instruction in factory operations for a variety of products and services. Inmates are compensated for their work with a subsistence wage and can receive raises based on their performance.



*Inmates working in Federal Prison Industries factory.*

Bureau institutions accommodate services and programs for inmates of the approximately 30 faiths represented within the population. Inmates are granted permission to wear or retain various religious items, and accommodations are made to facilitate observances of holy days. Bureau facilities offer "common fare" diets designed to meet the stringent dietary requirements common to several faith groups, such as the Jewish and Islamic faiths. Most institutions have sweat lodges to accommodate the religious requirements of those whose religious preference is Native American. Religious programs are led or supervised by staff chaplains, contract spiritual leaders, and community volunteers. Chaplains oversee inmate worship services and self-improvement programs such as study of sacred writings and religious workshops. Bureau chaplains also provide pastoral care, spiritual guidance, and counseling to inmates. Inmates may request visits and spiritual counseling from community representatives.

The Bureau believes that inmates are responsible for the behavior that led to their incarceration and for participating in self-improvement programs that will provide them with the skills they need to conduct themselves as productive, law-abiding citizens upon release. Inmates show responsibility through their behavior and conduct in prison, through active and constructive involvement in programs, and by living up to their financial commitments and responsibilities. The Bureau encourages inmates to help meet their family and financial obligations with their earnings from work or other financial assets. The Inmate Financial Responsibility Program requires inmates to make payments from their earnings to satisfy court-ordered fines, victim restitution, child support, and other monetary judgments. The majority of the court-ordered fine and restitution money goes to crime victims or victim support organizations.

The Bureau strives to create an environment for inmates that is as conducive to positive change as possible. In addition, Bureau facilities are clean, well-maintained, orderly, and well-managed in order to provide inmates and staff a healthy, normalized living and working environment.

## **Improving Inmates' Lives and Reducing Recidivism**

Research shows what corrections officials have long believed — that industrial work programs, vocational training, education, and drug treatment have a major impact on public safety. These programs reduce recidivism and reduce misconduct in prison. Drug treatment programs also decrease offenders' relapse to drug use after release. The Bureau is among the many correctional systems that have gathered evidence of the success of these programs.

### **The Post Release Employment Project**

The Post Release Employment Project is a long-term study designed to evaluate the impact of prison industrial work experience (alone and in conjunction with vocational and apprenticeship training) on former Federal inmates' post-release adjustment. A significant early finding of the research was that program participants showed better institutional adjustment — they were less likely to be involved in misconduct and, when involved, misconduct was less severe. Early data analysis also focused on the ex-inmates' first year in the community. (The first year after release from prison is critical to successful reintegration and to remaining crime free.) The major findings at the 1-year follow-up point were that program participants: (1) were 35 percent less likely to recidivate (be rearrested or have their post-confinement community supervision revoked) than comparison group members, (2) were more likely to be employed during their first year after release, and (3) earned slightly higher wages, on average, during the first year after release.

The ongoing research has found that, as much as 8 to 12 years after their release, inmates who worked in prison industries were 24 percent less likely to recidivate than inmates who did not participate, while inmates who participated in either vocational or apprenticeship training were 33 percent less likely to recidivate

than inmates who did not participate. The results further indicated that work program participants were 14 percent more likely to be employed following release from prison than those who did not participate. In addition, minority groups that are at the greatest risk for recidivism benefitted more from industrial work participation and vocational training than their non-minority counterparts.

## Education

An analysis of numerous factors affecting recidivism found that participation in education programs also has a positive effect on post-release success. The findings showed a significant decline in recidivism rates among inmates who completed one or more educational courses during each 6 months of their imprisonment. (Recidivism was measured as being rearrested or having parole revoked.)

## Residential Substance Abuse Treatment

Residential drug abuse treatment programs exist at 47 Bureau institutions, offering treatment to approximately 12,000 inmates each year. Inmates who participate in the residential programs are housed together in a separate unit of the prison that is reserved for drug treatment. The residential programs provide intensive treatment, 5 to 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, for 9 to 12 months. The remainder of each day is spent in education, work skills training, and other inmate programs.



*The Federal Correctional Institution, Marianna, Florida -- one of 47 institutions with a residential drug abuse treatment program.*

According to the results of a rigorous study of the effect of residential drug treatment, male and female inmates who completed the residential drug abuse treatment program and were released to the community for at least 3 years were less likely to be re-arrested, less likely to have their supervision revoked (and be returned to prison), and less likely to be detected for drug use than were similar



inmates who did not participate in the drug abuse treatment program. The study also found improved employment among women after release. Female inmates who completed residential drug abuse treatment were employed for more than two-thirds of the time that they were in the community following release, while women who did not receive treatment were employed 59.1 percent of the time. In addition, an evaluation of inmate behavior found that institution misconduct among male inmates who completed the residential drug abuse treatment program was reduced by 25 percent when compared to misconduct among similar male inmates who did not participate in the residential program, and institution misconduct among female inmates who completed residential treatment was reduced by 70 percent. These results demonstrate that residential drug abuse treatment in corrections-based settings makes a significant difference in the lives of inmates following their release from custody and provides a significant benefit to institution safety and security.

### **Specific Pro-Social Values Programs**

Encouraged by the positive results of the residential substance abuse treatment program, the Bureau has implemented a number of new residential programs for special populations (including younger offenders, high-security inmates, and intractable, quick-tempered inmates) who are responsible for much of the misconduct that occurs in Federal prisons. The cognitive restructuring approach used in the drug treatment programs was carried over as the foundation for programs to change the criminal thinking and behavior patterns of inmates. These programs focus on inmates' emotional and behavioral responses to difficult situations and emphasize life skills and the development of pro-social values, respect for self and others, responsibility for personal actions, and tolerance. Each program was developed with an evaluation component to ensure the program meets the goals of promoting positive behavior. While too early to assess the programs' effects in terms of reducing recidivism, the Bureau has found that these cognitive restructuring programs significantly reduce inmates' involvement in institution misconduct.

### **Preparing Inmates for Release**

Inmate program involvement is geared, ultimately, toward helping inmates prepare for their eventual release. The Bureau complements its array of programs with a specific Release Preparation Program in which inmates become involved near the end of their sentence. The program includes classes in resume writing, job seeking, and job retention skills. The program also includes presentations by officials from community-based organizations that help ex-inmates find employment and training opportunities after release from prison. The Bureau places most inmates in community corrections centers (halfway houses) prior to their release from custody in order to help them adjust to life in the community and find suitable post-release employment.

The Bureau's Inmate Placement Program provides additional post-release employment assistance to inmates. Many institutions hold mock job fairs to

instruct inmates in appropriate job interview techniques and to expose community recruiters to the skills available among inmates. Qualified inmates may apply for jobs with companies that have job openings. The Inmate Placement Program helps inmates prepare release portfolios which include a resume, education and training certificates, diplomas, education transcripts, and other significant documents needed for a successful job interview.

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

Not all Federal inmates are confined in prisons with fences. Some low-risk, non-violent inmates with short sentences serve their sentences in community corrections centers (also known as halfway houses). Community corrections centers are also used by the Bureau to place inmates in the community just prior to their release. These centers provide a structured, supervised environment and support in job placement, counseling, and other services. They allow inmates to gradually rebuild their ties to the community, and they allow correctional staff to supervise offenders' activities during this important readjustment phase. Inmates in community corrections centers are required to work and to pay a subsistence charge of 25 percent of their income to defray the cost of confinement. Some Federal inmates are placed in home confinement for a brief period at the end of their prison terms. They serve this portion of their sentences at home under strict schedules, curfew requirements, telephonic monitoring, and sometimes electronic monitoring.

Some minimum-security inmates from Federal prison camps perform labor-intensive work off institutional grounds for other Federal entities such as the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. armed services. These inmates work at their job site during the day and return to the institution at the end of the work day.

Some carefully-selected Federal inmates speak to youth groups at schools, universities, juvenile offender programs, and drug treatment programs to give juveniles and young adults a first-hand understanding of the consequences of drug use and crime. Other inmates volunteer to help the communities near their institution, providing services that otherwise would not likely be performed, such as repairing or rebuilding dilapidated buildings and cleaning up or beautifying streets, roadsides, parks, schools, ball fields, and other public grounds.

Under limited circumstances, inmates who meet strict requirements are allowed temporary releases from the institution through staff-escorted trips and furloughs. The Bureau permits approved inmates to go on staff-escorted trips into the community to visit a critically-ill member of their immediate family; attend the funeral of an immediate family member; receive medical treatment; or participate in other activities, such as a religious or work-related function.

A furlough is a temporary authorization for an appropriate inmate to be in the community without a staff escort. Inmates near the end of their sentences who require minimal security are granted permission to go on trips into the community

without escort to be present during a crisis in the immediate family, to participate in certain activities that will facilitate release transition, and to re-establish family and community ties. Furloughs are not very common, and inmates are carefully screened for risk to the community before they are released on a furlough. Research has shown that inmates who maintain ties with their families have reduced recidivism rates.

In addition to certain staff-escorted trips and furloughs, the Bureau helps inmates maintain their family and community ties through visiting, mail, and telephone privileges. The Bureau allows visits with approved family, friends, and attorneys. At its two highest-security prisons, visiting is done without physical contact between the inmate and the visitor. The Bureau does not permit conjugal visits.

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

The Bureau welcomes community involvement in its institutions and offices. Volunteers help inmates adapt successfully to imprisonment and prepare for their eventual adjustment into the community after release. Volunteers provide a variety of services such as spiritual counseling, assistance with marriage and family issues, substance abuse counseling, education and vocational training, and health education.



*Volunteers support and enhance many inmate programs.*

Most institutions have community relations boards that provide communication and support 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. In addition, Bureau institutions provide tours to members of the public who would like to visit a Federal prison.

## **The Image of Corrections**

Unfortunately, the general public often forms its impressions of prisons and correctional systems primarily from mass media sources like movies or the news. Movies about prisons are frequently gross misrepresentations of reality. Movies such as *White Heat*, *Bird Man of Alcatraz*, *Cool Hand Luke*, and *The Shawshank Redemption* are fictional depictions of prison life. These movies, and many others, exaggerate life within a prison and cast prison operations and administrators in a negative light.

Those who draw their impressions of prisons from movies alone may think of them as brutal environments with corrupt or incompetent staff who inflict needless cruelty on inmates. Others may think of prisons as unduly luxurious places that provide needless “amenities” at the expense of the taxpaying public. Still others come to conclusions based on documentaries of famous prisons, such as Alcatraz, or of news reports that tend to highlight an unfortunate, isolated event and make it appear as if it is representative of an entire correctional system.

The Bureau of Prisons prides itself on being an outstanding public organization, meeting its goal of ensuring public safety, and providing appropriate, efficient, safe, and humane correctional services and programs. Whether it is to dispel myths, clarify unfounded perceptions, or to further educate and inform, the agency welcomes the general public to become better acquainted with the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

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