

# How to do Time



Advertisement

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# Initial placement

## 1. Will each offender be placed at a particular federal prison of their choice, and close to their family?

Initial placement of an offender is based upon an initial classification of the individual by the Bureau of Prisons, based on security and medical needs, with consideration for how crowded some institutions are, an offender's specialized program needs, and court recommendations.

Classification information is obtained from the Presentence Investigation Report (PSR), and so it is essential that the attorney and client ensure that the information is both accurate and complete as to his offenses conduct, prior record, open or pending cases, physical and mental health, verifiable education level, and substance abuse if the offender wants to qualify for the Bureau's comprehensive Residential Drug Abuse Program (RDAP).

Each offender is assigned a security level: minimum, low, medium, or high security, based on offense characteristics, sentence, and history, and a Level of Care (I, II, III, or IV) based on his or her anticipated medical requirements. The facility nearest the offender's legal residence, as reflected in the PSR, that meets the security and medical care level requirements and which has bed space available is generally designated for service of sentence. So, if the offender would like to be placed in a minimum-security camp that houses offenders with stable chronic medical conditions, for example, but is classified by the Bureau of Prisons as low, medium, or high security, then the offender would not be initially assigned to a camp. Similarly, even if the offender qualifies for a minimum-security camp, but has significant medical issues, he would not initially be assigned to a camp without the resources to provide for the necessary medical care.

Similarly, if an offender knows of a particular federal prison near their home, the offender will not likely be assigned there if his or her initial security level classification or medical care level determined by the Bureau of Prisons are not the same as the security level and care level of the institution.

Finally, every new offender should know that the Bureau of Prisons currently houses a very large number of inmates, and can have extremely limited bed-space at some institutions, which can result in an offender's initial placement further from their homes than either they or the Bureau of Prisons would actually prefer. In such cases, a future transfer is a reasonable possibility.



## What to Bring

### 2. If an offender is granted self-surrender by the court, what should he take to prison?

It is usually best to arrive at a federal prison with as few personal possessions as possible because the offender is leaving his or her regular life and lifestyle for a while. Also, minimizing what one brings will lessen the possibility of confiscation by prison staff of unauthorized items, and reduce the amount of personal belongings that are returned or mailed back to the next of kin.

That said, the individual should bring no single item worth over \$100, meaning no expensive jewelry or wristwatch. A wedding band, if married, is fine, as well as a relatively inexpensive wristwatch and religious medal, if worn. The personal clothing the offender wears when reporting will be returned to the family or friends or attorney.

The offender should report with only a relatively modest amount of money, no more than \$300. Such an amount will permit some discretionary spending at the institution commissary and a phone call home during the initial days of confinement, thereby freeing the new inmate from having to rely on, or falling into debt to, other inmates. Caution should always be the watchword, should the new inmate encounter another more experienced inmate who offers to help purchase or buy something the new inmate cannot otherwise afford. Such offers can have illicit payment return terms that the new inmate is not prepared for, and can be dangerous! Similarly, if a new inmate arrives with a lot of money, other curious inmates can quickly become aware of it, which may result in the new inmate becoming a “target” by other inmates who would like little more than to get some of the new inmate’s money.

The offender should take a one-month supply of any prescription medication. In all probability, the Bureau of Prisons will have the necessary medications on hand, and your supply will not be required, but if you take a medicine that is not currently routinely used by the Bureau of Prisons, your supply will allow plenty of time to get necessary approvals and pharmacy stock. Understand that any medications you take with you will likely be held for you in the Health Services Department, and dispensed from the pharmacy at the “pill line.”

### 3. How much money can a new offender have in his prison account? How much can he spend? How can he receive money and other materials from his friends and families while confined?

The money new inmates bring with them to prison, as mentioned above, will be used to open an inmate Trust Fund account, from which they will be required to pay for their personal telephone calls, postage stamps, and items from the commissary (personal hygiene items, snacks, etc.) which they might want to purchase. This really is the only preliminary information that a new offender needs prior to entering prison.

Immediately after their arrival, as noted in the intake process remarks, inmates will have all of the answers governing procedural regulations given them in the prison's Admission & Orientation Inmate Manual. The new inmate will also receive all pertinent information directly from a staff member from the institution business office and/or commissary. Once armed with not only written information but information from prison staff members who run the Inmate Trust Fund accounts, the new inmate, within only one week or so after arriving, will have all the information needed regarding receiving funds, how they can be spent, and what restrictions and approvals are in place regarding receipt of anything from family or friends.

### 4. What about bringing medications?

Prescription medicine can be brought, with the understanding that it will be checked by institution medical staff to determine if it is in the Bureau of Prisons' medical formulary. If a particular medication is in the Bureau's formulary, the personal medication brought to the prison will be confiscated, and new medication issued to replace it.

If medication possessed by the new inmate on commitment is not in the Bureau of Prisons' formulary, it will be confiscated, and the new inmate will have to see medical staff concerning whether a substitute medication can or will be prescribed. The new inmate should not bring over-the-counter medications.



# Intake and orientation

## 5. What can a new prisoner expect from staff upon arrival at a federal prison?

Upon arrival, the offender will be met by either a correctional officer or member of the Receiving and Discharge Department (R & D). A strip search, issue of institutional clothing, photograph, fingerprinting, and inventory of personal property will subsequently be performed in the R & D Department. If the offender arrives after normal working hours or when the R & D Department is not staffed, he or she will be taken to an area where a strip search will be conducted, issued institutional clothing, and likely placed in a secure cell until being processed for intake through R & D.

This process, as well as the R & D process, will be conducted in a very business-like manner, which for new inmates can seem impersonal. However, this is a good time for the new inmate to simply watch, listen, and learn about the staff and what they do.

## 6. Who are these staff, and what do they do during the intake process?

The R & D staff are those who perform the search, fingerprinting, and personal property inventory of the new arrival. A Correctional Counselor or a Case Manager will conduct a brief private interview. A Medical staff member, usually a Physicians Assistant, will conduct a medical screening.

## 7. What is most important for the inmate at this initial intake phase?

The inmate needs to understand that this is the business of incarceration, and to understand that prison staff members are not trying to be demeaning. It is also wise for the new arrival to listen carefully to any and all questions that the staff members ask, and to answer those questions honestly. If the new inmate does not understand a question, it is entirely appropriate to ask for clarification or meaning.

Similarly, the new inmate should read and fully understand any and all forms that are provided, some for the inmate's signature. A failure in this early communication process could lead to potential difficulties at some future point of incarceration. Forms and information relative to telephone use, mail correspondence, and visiting are provided.

## **8. Will the new inmate receive written rules and guidance before being placed in the general inmate population?**

Yes. Upon arrival, each new inmate is given an Admission and Orientation (A & O) handbook, for which they must sign. I cannot overstate the importance of this document and the inmate's receipt of it with signature, because from that moment forward, the inmate will be held responsible for knowing and complying with all of the Bureau of Prisons' institutional rules outlined in it.

The A & O handbook is thorough and describes the various institutional departments and staff, schedules for the inmate to follow within the institution, and visiting and correspondence information. The smartest action that a new inmate can take with respect to the A & O handbook is to read it, cover to cover, as soon as possible, and to keep it at hand for future reference.

## **9. When does a new arrival enter the general inmate population?**

Upon successful completion of the intake process. Successful completion means that the institution has received all necessary official documentation from the sentencing court, and from the respective U.S. Marshals and U.S. probation offices. Such documentation includes the Judgment Order, the Presentence Investigation Report, and appropriate U.S. Marshals documents. If such documentation is lacking or incomplete, it may not be possible for staff to allow the inmate to enter the general inmate population.

The attorney or client should contact the Inmate Systems Management department (records office) at the facility designated prior to arrival to determine if the necessary documentation has been received. Similarly, if during the intake screening process some interviewing staff members identify a potential concern for the new inmate's health or safety, then the individual may not be put in the general inmate population.

Finally, in situations where bed space at an institution to which an individual has been designated is very limited, there have been instances requiring that a new arrival be temporarily housed in administrative detention status, in the restricted Special Housing Unit of the institution, until bed space in the open inmate population becomes available.

## **10. What is important for the inmate to know if not placed in the general inmate population, and what, if anything, will they be told?**

The new arrival should understand that most federal prisons do not lock their general inmate population up in isolated cells 24 hours per day, which means simply that inmates in the general population

are moving about. Given that fact, Bureau of Prisons' staff who are charged with ensuring an inmate's safety cannot and should not place a new arrival in the open inmate population, unless and until they have complete case documentation which, in conjunction with the intake interviews, provides reasonable assurance that the new inmate will not encounter an identifiable and undue risk if housed with the other inmates.

The new arrival's health can be a concern. If, during the intake screening process, medical staff determine that the inmate may have a contagious disease, such as measles, chicken pox, or tuberculosis, that individual will likely be placed in medical isolation until necessary steps to protect him and the other inmates and staff have been completed.

If the new arrival cannot be placed in the institution's general inmate population because of insufficient or un-received documentation, or for health reasons, he will be so informed. If a potential security risk to his or her safety or to the safety of others is identified by staff during the intake process, the new arrival may be given only limited information because such information cannot divulge sensitive or investigative details which the staff has or which the staff may need to pursue.



## 11. What happens when the new inmate is placed in the general inmate population?

The inmate will be assigned specific housing and will begin an Admission and Orientation period. The new arrival should expect during this period to meet his or her Case Manager, Correctional Counselor, and Unit Manager, all of whom compose the inmate's Unit Team. These are the key staff members with whom the inmate should become familiar, as they will have primary responsibility for managing almost every aspect of the inmate's case during confinement.

The new arrival will also attend formal Admission and Orientation sessions, where staff members from every department in the institution will provide information and answer questions concerning all aspects of confinement.

At some point during the first two weeks, each newly arrived inmate is seen by a qualified medical staff member who takes a medical history and completes a physical examination. This is an excellent time to discuss with the medical provider any existing medical issues, history of treatment, known allergies, and medications. Any mental health issues, particularly those involving medications, should also be discussed with the medical provider at this time.

## 12. What is important for the new inmate during this orientation period?

As mentioned earlier, it is most important for new inmates to read the A & O handbook they are issued. This will lay a foundation for the information that they will receive from several staff members at the Admission and Orientation sessions.

Next, it is important for the new inmate to observe and to listen, keeping personal business to himself, rather than carelessly sharing it with other inmates, and to understand his or her own accountability for where to be at any given time in the institution.

## 13. Will the inmate be given a work assignment? What if the new inmate is not satisfied with his housing or work assignments?

The new inmate may be given a temporary work assignment during the Admission and Orientation period, or may be assigned after completing it. The new inmate should know that the initial work assignment is based solely upon institutional need, rather than the inmate's personal preference. Therefore, he may be assigned what could be perceived as menial work, or work that is uninteresting. However, he will receive some monetary stipend for his work, and during the Orientation phase, he will see and hear from staff members about work assignments the inmate might find more interesting, and how to go about applying for those assignments.

With regard to his housing assignment, a new inmate may be assigned to quarters with another inmate not of his choosing, and usually to an upper bunk bed. Through routine inmate movement and in meeting other inmates, it may be possible to discuss changing quarters assignments with a member of the Unit Team, usually the Correctional Counselor. Also, through seniority and clear conduct, an inmate can receive preferred quarters within a housing unit.

## 14. In addition to quarters and work assignments, what other aspects will the new inmate learn about?

The new inmate will be told about how the custodial staff, or correctional officers, conduct their supervision of inmates; disciplinary processes; visiting privileges; mailroom services; sentence computation and earning of good time credit; educational services which include available classes, training, law and leisure libraries, and recreational activities; medical and mental health services; psychology programs; religious services; food service; payment of court-ordered fines and restitution; and release planning and preparation programs.

## 15. Can new inmates "learn the ropes" from other inmates?

It is inevitable that every new inmate will learn something about institutional rules, staff roles, and various aspects of prison life from other inmates. However, caution in this regard is needed because the only things a new inmate can know about another inmate is what the other inmate chooses to tell the new inmate.

Potential pitfalls abound, new inmates who wish to get through the process of incarceration successfully, without negative repercussions, and with an eye toward benefiting from all available programs for which they may qualify, should let the written Bureau of Prisons' regulations be their primary guide, rather than other inmates. Further, in understanding how the Bureau of Prisons' regulations are implemented and actually function, inmates should rely primarily upon staff for clarification, as well as on information in the inmate law library at the institution.

In determining which inmates to seek advice from, new inmates may consider speaking with inmates who work in the education department. Also, in attempting to decide on a possible work assignment, the new inmate can speak to other inmates who work in various departments, keeping in mind that information they receive will not override the information that is provided during the Admission & Orientation process.

Finally, an inmate always has the right, throughout confinement, to obtain legal counsel, preferably from an attorney who is familiar with Bureau of Prisons' policies and procedures, and who is experienced in federal inmate-related matters.

## Solving problems

## 16. What if a staff member seems unwilling to be helpful, is less than responsive to a problem, or does not seem open or straightforward in communicating with the inmate?

The inmate almost always has a Case Manager, Correctional Counselor, and Unit Manager available to them for assistance. In addition, every day the inmate goes to eat a meal, there are almost always staff members available to them in the dining area from all institutional departments, including upper management of the institution, which are the associate wardens and the warden.

The availability of a wide range of staff members is important because Bureau of Prisons' staff members are human beings, meaning that some will be more effective communicators than others and some will be more thorough and patient than others. So, if an inmate is experiencing difficulty in dealing with a particular staff member, there are multiple other staff members who can address a problem.

## 17. What if an inmate follows all of the rules and regulations but encounters a situation or has a problem that none of the institution staff, including the warden, can or will resolve?

This is likely to be a rare scenario; just because an inmate may not receive an answer to a question, or receive a response that is personally favorable, does not mean that staff have not responded and acted within the scope of Bureau of Prisons' policy.

Sometimes inmates mistakenly believe that because they do not receive action or a response they want, somehow the institution staff has mistreated them. This usually stems from incomplete or inefficient communication, lack of understanding of Bureau of Prisons' policies and procedures, and inmates not speaking to all appropriate institution staff who could resolve a given dispute.

That said, there is a procedure that is available to inmates, known as the Administrative Remedy Procedures, by which an inmate can request reconsideration of staff decisions and/or formal reviews of staff decisions at levels higher than the level at which the decision was made.



## 18. What do the Administrative Remedy Procedures involve?

First, the inmate should make a meaningful attempt at informal resolution of a dispute. Then, if unsuccessful, the inmate can file an Administrative Remedy form, BP-9, to the warden.

If this step fails to resolve the issue for the inmate, the inmate can then file an Administrative remedy form BP-10, to the Regional Office for the region in which the inmate is confined. If that process is unsatisfactory, the inmate may then file an Administrative remedy form BP-11, to the Bureau of Prisons Central Office in Washington, D.C., for the highest level of formal review.

One of the most important things an inmate should consider, both in filing an Administrative Remedy complaint and reasonably expecting a positive result from the filing, is whether or not the staff action or decision which is being appealed was made within the authority and parameters of Bureau of Prisons' policies. If it was, there is little a formal review will accomplish, regardless of what other inmates may say.

Conversely, review of appeals can involve careful scrutiny by Bureau of Prisons' legal staff as well. So, if a complaint involves a staff decision or action that was not made within the parameters of policy, the action or decision will be rectified for the inmate.

## 19. What can an inmate anticipate in terms of maintaining clear conduct and open communication with staff?

An inmate who conducts himself in an above-board manner at all times, in terms of both staff interaction and interactions with other inmates, generally will not attract extra scrutiny or suspicion.

The inmate likely will receive favorable consideration for security and custody level reductions when eligible, which can result in placement in a less secure setting with less intense staff supervision and participation in community activities, if eligible.

Earlier I mentioned that an offender who is initially assigned to a prison farther from his home than might be preferred could receive a future transfer to an institution closer to their home. It must be stressed that clear conduct is required in order for an inmate to receive such a transfer.

Disciplinary action, on the other hand, can result in placement in a more restrictive setting, an upgrade in security level and custodial supervision, loss of good time, greater restrictions on visiting, unfavorable consideration for transfer to a prison closer to the inmate's home, not to mention loss of preferred quarters assignment and loss of eligibility for certain programs.

## 20. What about problems with other inmates?

If there is a situational conflict or personality clash that is unlikely in the immediate short term to escalate into a physical altercation, then avoidance is always the best practice. For example, if the conflict is with a bunkmate, roommate, or co-worker, the inmate should tell the other person that he will request a bed, room or work assignment change, which he can do through the Correctional Counselor or a work supervisor.

It may not seem fair, especially when tempers flare, but it is the best way to conduct one's self above-board and not get into disciplinary trouble. If an inmate encounters a more serious threat or intimidation that is likely to escalate into a serious conflict, or the threat of being hurt, then there are steps that can and should be taken, again, however, with avoidance being the key.

As mentioned previously, there are many different staff members with whom an inmate will become familiar and interact on a regular basis. I strongly recommend that an inmate work to develop a positive and respectful working relationship with as many staff members as possible, though not being overly friendly, which can draw adverse reaction from other inmates. Then, if a potentially violent threat arises, the inmate can and should confide in a staff member that he trusts and who knows him. Such a staff member can be anyone—the Unit Officer, the Case Manager, a work supervisor, a Lieutenant, a staff teacher, etc.

Every staff member in a Federal Bureau of Prisons facility is considered, first and foremost, to be a correctional worker; their primary jobs, regardless of their specialty area of work, is the institution and inmate security.

## 21. Some inmates have court-ordered fines, criminal penalty assessments, or restitution. Will these need to be paid for from the same Inmate Trust Fund account that is used for personal spending?

Possibly, yes. The payment of court-directed fines or fees will be dependent upon how the court order is written. Some fines or fees, for example, might be imposed strictly as a condition of the offender's supervised release, after incarceration. Some court orders do not distinguish. The information is contained in the court's Judgment and Commitment (J & C) order that is also used to impose sentence, and so it could benefit the offender to review that document closely for any needed clarification.

After arrival at a federal prison, institution staff will review the J & C and, if payment is required during confinement, they will discuss payment options with the inmate. When an installment-type of payment plan is needed, the inmate and the Unit team can set up a payment schedule, which can involve regular fixed withdrawals from the inmate's Trust Fund Account.

The Bureau of Prisons' term for this is the Inmate Financial Responsibility Program (IFRP), and the new inmate should understand that the Bureau of Prisons is quite serious in its administration of the program, to the point that there can be serious repercussions if prison staff determine that an inmate is not making a meaningful effort at satisfying court-imposed financial obligations.

Sanctions that the bureau can impose for failure, which they call refusal, to make measurable progress in a payment plan can include loss of a preferred housing assignment, reduction of pay for an inmate's work assignment, and exclusion from programs for which the inmate may otherwise be qualified, including furloughs and halfway house placement.



## Eligibility

## 22. With regard to furloughs, what can an offender reasonably expect?

It is important for every new offender to understand that there is no entitlement to unescorted social furloughs while they are serving their sentence, or to halfway house placement before the conclusion of the sentence. With that understanding, there is the matter of technical eligibility for these programs, and the fact that technical eligibility does not mean an automatic approval in all cases.

First, for an unescorted social furlough, an inmate must be, and remain classified as, minimum security. Additionally, he must have been assigned what is known as Community Custody, which is the very lowest supervision assignment in the Bureau of Prisons. The inmate must have maintained clear conduct and otherwise comported themselves appropriately during confinement, as observed and judged by staff, not according only to the inmate's self-report or accounting (this is important).

Social furlough eligibility is further contingent upon how much time the offender has remaining to serve, since furloughs cannot occur early in the sentence. Initially, there can be one-day furloughs, and subsequently, as the sentence is served, there can be overnight furloughs. The Bureau of Prisons places restrictions on the frequency, and the inmate bears the cost of social furloughs.

Other possible furloughs can be granted under extraordinary circumstances, such as admission to a community hospital or to attend the funeral of an immediate family member, and sometimes for specially defined and regulated legal or religious functions. These are granted on a case-by-case basis, and always require minimum-security classification and clear conduct.

## **23.** With regard to halfway house placement, what can an offender reasonably expect?

Pre-release halfway house placement, known by the Bureau of Prisons as placement in a Residential Reentry Center (RRC, formerly called community correctional centers—CCC's), is a program that is widely utilized for as many inmates as possible.

The general time an inmate will be approved for RRC placement will range from 30 days to, in a few cases, six months. No inmate should consider RRC placement as a means of early release from prison, nor that a lengthy RRC placement will be likely.

The Bureau of Prisons contracts with private agencies for halfway house space, and therefore one factor for placement is federal funding (regardless of how many available beds a particular halfway house says it has). Another factor will be the length of time an individual has served because RRC placement is provided for transition back to community life from confinement, and offenders who serve long sentences generally need greater transitional assistance.

Other factors considered by bureau staff in determining RRC placement for an offender are the nature and quality of family and community ties and the inmate's conduct during confinement. There are some offenders who, because of the crime they committed, will be excluded from RRC placement. However, most offenders will receive the benefit of some RRC placement.





## For family members

### 24. What can you tell family members about prison issues, starting with visiting?

The new inmate will receive a copy of visiting regulations and forms to send his family, which need to be completed and returned in order to visit. The family must understand that it is imperative for them to answer the questions on the visiting forms accurately and honestly because failure to do so may result in a loss or denial of visiting privileges.

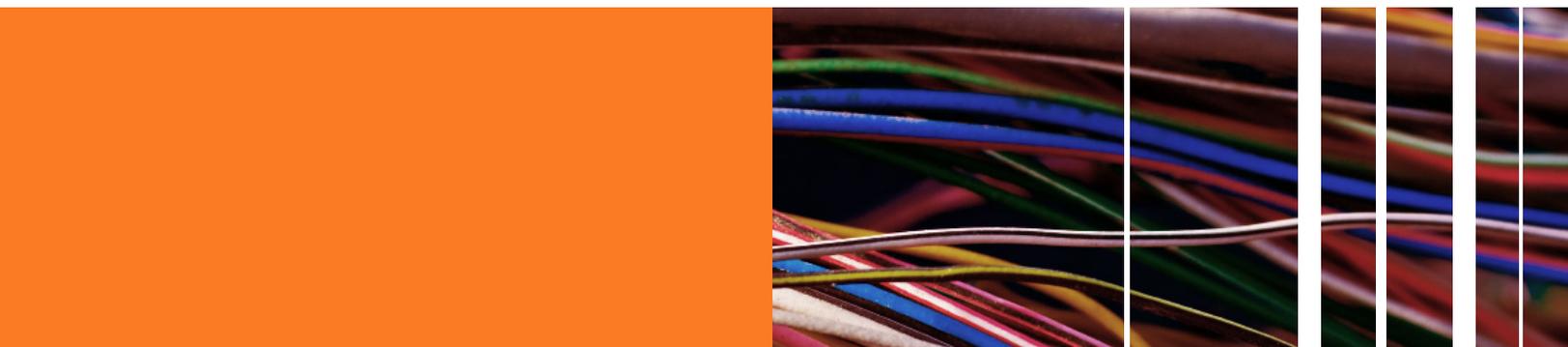
For example, a family member who has a prior court conviction of any type, even if given probation, should report it matter-of-factly on the appropriate section of the visiting form. A background check by the Bureau of Prisons will uncover this and if it has been intentionally omitted, may result in denying visiting rights.

New inmates will be given a copy of their approved visiting list, usually by their assigned Correctional Counselor. Families should ensure that they are approved prior to traveling to the prison to visit. It is helpful if the family can prepare for visiting by viewing a federal prison as a serious and controlled setting, and not a place of emotional warmth. There are no private and/or unsupervised visits with family members in Bureau of Prisons' facilities. However, families can be somewhat relieved in knowing that the majority of visiting rooms are open ones, without the glass partitions and telephones for communicating so often depicted in television and movie dramas. Inmates are permitted to kiss and embrace at the beginning and conclusion of a visit.

Some facilities even provide outdoor visiting areas when the weather permits. Family members should be prepared for being subjected to search procedures and supervision when visiting. Such scrutiny is necessary because, unfortunately, one of the ways illegal drugs and other types of contraband are smuggled into prisons is by visitors, including family visitors. Therefore, it is recommended that family visitors bring very little with them into the prison, giving nothing to their incarcerated loved one, other than change which can be spent on the inmate at the vending machines in the visiting room. After being cleared into the Visiting Room, family visitors will be expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times, meaning they should avoid any conduct which might make correctional staff suspicious, especially excessive physical contact.

Another important factor that the family should be prepared for is the possibility of early termination of their visit, should the visiting room become crowded. This can and does happen to enable other inmates to receive visits. This can be an emotionally difficult situation for both the inmate and the family, so it is important to remember that early visit termination due to crowding will be an impartial and necessary decision by prison staff. Arguing with prison staff will not improve or change the decision. In fact, in order to maintain visiting privileges, all visitors are expected to comply with prison staff at all times. The Bureau of Prisons holds the inmate accountable if a visitor fails to follow regulations or comply with staff instructions.

Finally, the family should know that while their loved one is serving a sentence in a federal prison, misconduct which results in the receipt of a written Incident Report may be sanctioned by the loss of visitation privileges, even if the misconduct was not related to visiting. The Bureau of Prisons expects clear conduct, if the inmate is to be permitted full privileges, and because receiving visits is meant to be a motivating factor to help an inmate maintain clear conduct. With this understanding, the family can reiterate the importance of visiting to the inmate. Should the inmate incur misconduct sanctions that include a temporary loss of visitation, rather than being angry at the Bureau of Prisons, the family will be better served by helping their loved one understand that family visitation is a priority and worth clear conduct behavior.



## 25. Are correspondence and telephone calls subject to security measures?

Family members should understand that telephone calls they receive from an inmate are subject to monitoring and recording for security, and that their incoming mail will be opened and screened. Therefore, what they say and what they write should always be above board and appropriate.

Further, the family needs to know that an inmate is prohibited under Bureau of Prisons' regulations from conducting a business while confined. So telephone correspondence must not involve such prohibited conduct.

Finally, the family should be strongly cautioned against making 3-way, or third-party calls, after the inmate has connected with them telephonically, because this, too, is prohibited by the Bureau of Prisons. Such calls are generally viewed by the bureau as circumventing telephone regulations, which are reasonable, since inmates are allowed a large number of people on their authorized telephone lists, which can be frequently modified.

For correspondence, the Bureau of Prisons now provides for electronic e-mail privileges to most inmates in addition to written mail. Both forms of communication, like telephone calls, are subject to monitoring by staff.

## 26. What should the family know about the prison disciplinary process?

As already mentioned, the new inmate will receive a full and comprehensive list of Bureau of Prisons' rules and regulations which includes all prohibited acts immediately upon arrival at a federal prison. Therefore, the family should understand that there is usually very little excuse for an offender's claim that he may not have known he was violating a rule.

Also, the family should understand that Bureau of Prisons' staff are generally much too busy with daily routines to write disciplinary reports against an inmate simply because the staff member dislikes the inmate. In fact, the formal disciplinary process requires an eyewitness staff account of an inmate's prohibited conduct, further investigation by a Correctional Supervisor, and then review with the inmate in person by a Unit Team staff member and, later, if referred by the Unit Team, by a Disciplinary Hearing Officer (DHO). The process leaves very little room for the personal likes or dislikes of a single staff member.

The family should realize that the institution's DHO is virtually autonomous as an independent department within the institution. Finally, even if found guilty of an act, the inmate has an appeal process whereby all disciplinary proceedings are reviewed at administrative levels higher than the institution's.

## 27. What should the family know about medical care in the Bureau of Prisons?

The family should understand that when an offender is sentenced to serve a federal prison term, the Bureau of Prisons must assume all responsibility for medical care.

A personal doctor will not be able to continue treating the inmate, and neither will the new inmate or family have a choice in selecting a medical provider. Each Bureau of Prisons facility has at least one licensed physician on staff, and most frequently, those physicians specialize in family practice or internal medicine. Many are board certified in their specialty areas, as well.

The medical services are extended by use of mid-level providers, usually Physician's Assistants or Nurse Practitioners who will generally provide the initial evaluation of a medical concern. However, if necessary, a physician or specialist from the community will also be available.



As mentioned earlier, it is a good idea to bring a month's supply of any prescription medications if possible. This will ensure an initial supply of the inmate's medicine until he is examined by a Bureau of Prisons physician and longer term arrangements are made.

The standard of medical care provided in the Bureau of Prisons is based on the standard of medical care provided in the community, and regular review and accreditation of the medical practices within facilities is required. The Bureau of Prisons policy is to provide medically necessary care. This means that any medical care determined by Bureau of Prisons staff to be medically necessary will be provided, but treatment that might be medi-

cally appropriate but not always necessary, may not be provided. For example, some hernia repairs or repair of old, existing orthopedic issues that do not significantly interfere with daily living may be deferred.

The medical staffing can vary from one federal prison to another, and offenders whose needs cannot be managed at one might be placed in another, which may mean a move further from their families. Families should be as supportive as possible under such circumstances, knowing that the health of their loved one should supersede proximity to the family. Also, the family should know that many prison facilities augment their medical care with doctors from the community, usually specialists, on a contract basis. These consulting specialists are available if Bureau of Prisons staff determine that a specialty consultation is required, and any recommendations made by a consulting specialist will be evaluated by a Bureau of Prisons physician for compliance with the agency's scope of service.

Finally, the Bureau of Prisons has some institutions which are strictly for in-patient medical care and surgery, if needed. The hardest part for the family, I believe, is not having a choice in the health care of their loved one during confinement. But focusing on the positives of the Bureau of Prisons' system can help, even if that system is more impersonal to the inmate than private medical practice is. Finally, the family can be assured that each Bureau of Prisons Region has a Regional Health Services Administrator, who is usually open to knowing about serious and significant health care concerns, should an inmate believe medical needs are not being adequately addressed.

## 28. Do you have any final words of advice?

Here are the three most important pieces of advice that I can to the offender who will be going to a prison facility for the first time:

First, the court proceedings and, ultimately, sentencing to prisons, has likely taken a very serious toll on the offender and his or her family psychologically, emotionally, and often financially. When the time for confinement finally arrives, which suspends the individual's freedom and separates him or her from family, it sometimes happens that the offender or family will vent frustrations on or toward the Bureau of Prisons. It is important to keep the perspective, however, that the Bureau of Prisons is not responsible for the current circumstances. Ultimately, it will not be the Bureau of Prisons' responsibility to re-build lives or relationships, although there are prison programs and counseling that can be beneficial. Straight thinking in this regard can empower the offender and family, to help them avoid the non-productive trap of feeling as though they are victims.

Second, the offender is well-advised to keep important personal information about himself and his family confidential. This does not mean being so secretive as to arouse the suspicions of other inmates. But it should be painfully obvious that there are real criminals in prisons, and becoming vulnerable to these criminals will only complicate life for the well-meaning inmates who truly wish to serve their sentences with as little hassle as possible. Well-meaning inmates can be conned, their family's privacy and well-being compromised, and life seriously disrupted, if they are too friendly with the wrong inmates.

Last, humility, clear conduct, and an understanding that prison, while offering a variety of programs and activities, may be an experience of some drudgery. There are no entitlements, which should help the offender appreciate freedom and family even more. With self-reliance and keeping the big picture in mind, the offender can focus on the confinement term and returning home and staying out of prison. There is no sounder advice than this.

