



“A Message from the Inspector General: Inspection of the BOP’s Federal Correctional Institution Waseca,” May 2023

Hello, I’m Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today my office released a report on our first unannounced inspection of a federal prison, launching our new inspection program. Because this was our first one, we selected for inspection a prison—the all-female Federal Correctional Institution in Waseca, Minnesota—that scored as lower risk on the OIG’s pilot risk assessment model. However, despite this low-risk score, our inspection found that FCI Waseca faces several critical challenges.

For example, while FCI Waseca is generally well-run and both inmates and staff reported feeling safe, it suffers from a significant shortage of Correctional Officers. As a result, staff from departments such as Education must frequently serve in correctional posts rather than attend to their regular duties. However, this has left insufficient personnel available to support inmate education and caused cancelled or delayed programming. We found long waitlists for many First Step Act-related programs, which could result in inmates being released without the skills they need to successfully reintegrate into society.

We also identified staff shortages in both FCI Waseca’s Health Services and Psychology Services Departments, which have caused delays in physical and mental healthcare treatment. Such delays can potentially result in more serious health issues for inmates, create further demands on healthcare staff, and increase the costs of future treatments.

Additionally, we identified critical infrastructure issues, including significant damage to building roofs that have caused leaks and led to unsanitary food services situations, medical and dental offices being temporarily abandoned, damage to medical and dental equipment, and certain inmate cells occasionally being unusable. We also observed many inmate beds positioned near pipes that occasionally leak. Further, the prison’s security camera system did not provide adequate coverage to monitor inmate activity, and we found that the institution is struggling to limit the amount of contraband in the prison.

Unfortunately, these issues are not unique to FCI Waseca. Recent OIG reports have found the Federal Bureau of Prisons, or BOP, is widely struggling with challenges due to its staffing issues, aging infrastructure, insufficient security camera coverage, and difficulties preventing the introduction of contraband.

It’s critical that BOP develop a strategic approach to address these significant challenges and ensure that federal prisons are safe, secure, and efficiently run.

To read our report, please visit our website oig.justice.gov, or go to oversight.gov. Thank you for joining me today.

(Stock media provided by composer William Pearson and publisher Prolific Two Publishing/Pond5.com, www.pond5.com.)
