

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced today the release of a report examining the impact of an aging inmate population on the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The OIG found that the aging inmate population has had an adverse impact on the BOP's ability to provide a safe, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure environment for inmates age 50 and older, and to assist them when they reenter the community. Additionally, although the BOP revised its compassionate release policy over a year ago to expand consideration for inmates 65 and older, we found that only two such inmates have been released under the revised provisions.

According to BOP data, from fiscal year (FY) 2009 to FY 2013 inmates age 50 and older (aging inmates) in BOP-managed institutions were the fastest growing segment of the BOP population, increasing by 25 percent, from 24,857 to 30,962. During the same period, the population of inmates 49 and younger (younger inmates) decreased approximately 1 percent, including an even larger decrease of 29 percent in inmates aged 29 and younger.

Today's report identifies and describes several concerns about the BOP's management of its aging inmate population. Specifically:

- We found that aging inmates cost an average of \$24,538 to incarcerate, 8 percent more than the average cost of \$22,676 to incarcerate younger inmates, and that average costs rise with age. This difference is driven by healthcare spending: during FY 2013, institutions with the highest percentage of aging inmates in their population spent five times more per inmate on medical care (\$10,114) than institutions with the lowest percentage of aging inmates (\$1,916).
- BOP institutions do not have appropriate staffing levels to address the needs of aging inmates, and they provide limited training for this purpose. Institutions lack adequate health services staff to address aging inmates' medical needs, which sometimes results in long waiting periods for inmates to receive care. Aging inmates also often require assistance with activities of daily living, such as dressing and moving around within the institution, but institution staff is not responsible for ensuring inmates can accomplish these activities. At some institutions, healthy inmates work as companions to aging inmates, but training and oversight varies, increasing the risk that aging inmates will be victimized or will not receive the assistance they need. In addition, we found that while Social Workers are uniquely qualified to address the release preparation needs of aging inmates, such as planning aftercare and ensuring continuity of medical care, there are only 36 Social Workers working with nearly 165,000 sentenced inmates at BOP-managed facilities nationwide. Institution staff also told us that they do not receive enough training on how to identify the signs of aging.
- BOP institutions have facilities that are inadequate for or pose challenges for those with physical limitations. Aging inmates often require lower bunks or handicapped-accessible cells, but overcrowding throughout the BOP limits these types of living spaces. Aging inmates with limited mobility also encounter difficulties navigating

institutions that lack elevators and/or have narrow sidewalks or uneven terrain. The BOP has not conducted a nationwide review of the accessibility of its institutions since 1996.

- BOP programs, which often focus on education and job skills, do not address the needs of aging inmates, many of whom have already obtained an education or do not plan to seek further employment after release. Though BOP institutions can and do design programs, including release preparation programs, to meet the needs of their respective populations, even institutions with high percentages of aging inmates rarely have programs specifically for aging inmates.
- Many aging inmates could be viable candidates for early release, but the BOP's revised eligibility provisions for aging inmates to request compassionate release have not been effective. Over a year ago, the DOJ concluded that aging inmates are generally less of a public safety threat and the BOP announced an expanded compassionate release policy to include them as part of the Attorney General's "Smart on Crime" initiative. However, the DOJ significantly limited the number of inmates eligible for this expanded release policy by imposing several eligibility requirements, and as a result only two inmates had been released under the new provision. The OIG's own analysis found that aging inmates commit less misconduct while incarcerated and have a lower rate of re-arrest once released. We therefore concluded that expanding the eligibility provisions, including lowering the age requirement from age 65 to age 50 and revising the time served provisions for aging inmates without a medical condition, would further assist the BOP in reducing overcrowding by increasing the pool of potential candidates for compassionate release, and could result in significant cost savings.

The report makes eight recommendations to improve the BOP's management of its aging inmate population. The BOP concurred with all eight recommendations.

Today's report can be found on the OIG's website at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2015/e1505.pdf>.