



# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

## U.S. Department of Justice

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### DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Medical Staffing Challenges

The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced today the release of a report examining the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) medical staffing challenges. We found that the recruitment and retention of medical professionals is a serious challenge for the BOP in large part because it competes with private employers that offer higher pay and benefits. We further found that the BOP does not identify or address its recruiting challenges in a strategic manner, and that it does not take full advantage of staffing flexibilities such as those available through the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS).

The OIG's specific findings in the report released today include:

- **The compensation and incentives BOP offers to civil service medical staff are not sufficient to alleviate staffing shortages.** Multiple factors, including the location of institutions, the correctional setting, local market factors, and the limitations of the government pay scale negatively affect the BOP's ability to recruit and retain medical professionals. We found a significant gap between government salaries and local average salaries for comparable healthcare positions. In an attempt to narrow these gaps, the BOP has increasingly relied on monetary and nonmonetary recruitment and retention incentives, but we found these are not always sufficient to reduce medical staffing vacancies.
- **The BOP does not identify or address recruiting challenges in an agency-wide, strategic manner.** The BOP does not strategically assess which vacancies have the greatest overall impact on its ability to provide medical care to inmates. We found that the BOP collects and maintains, but does not analyze, data on vacancies, incentives, temporary duty assignments, and the cost of contract medical care that would be helpful to assess its needs and prioritize medical staffing vacancies agency-wide.
- **The BOP does not use the authority it has to assign PHS officers to positions based on greatest need.** We found that the conditions of PHS officers' employment make them more mobile than civil service employees, and that PHS promotion incentives benefit PHS officers who change duty stations. However, the BOP does not take advantage of these flexibilities to better utilize PHS officers to fill high-priority vacancies.

The report released today makes two recommendations to the BOP to address its medical staffing challenges. The BOP agreed with both recommendations.

Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2016/e1602.pdf>.