



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Use of Restrictive Housing for Inmates with Mental Illness

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced today the release of a report examining the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) use of restrictive housing for inmates with mental illness. In today's report, the DOJ OIG concludes that while the BOP has taken a number of steps to address the mental health concerns for inmates in restrictive housing, significant issues remain regarding the adequacy of the BOP's policies and its implementation efforts in this critical area.

The specific findings in today's report include:

- **BOP policies do not adequately address the confinement of inmates with mental illness in restrictive housing.** BOP guidance and policies do not clearly define "restrictive housing" or "extended placement." Although the BOP states that it does not practice solitary confinement, or even recognize the term, the OIG found inmates, including those with mental illness, who were housed in single-cell confinement for long periods of time, isolated from other inmates and with limited human contact. Further, BOP policies do not limit the maximum amount of time that inmates can spend in restrictive housing. As a result, inmates, including those with mental illness, may spend years and even decades in restrictive housing. The OIG also found that inmates with mental illness spend disproportionately longer periods of time in restrictive housing than their peers.
- **The BOP does not sufficiently track or monitor the confinement of inmates with mental illness in restrictive housing.** In particular, the BOP does not monitor inmates' cumulative time in restrictive housing or track the placement of inmates in single-cell confinement.
- **BOP mental health staff do not always document inmates' mental disorders.** The lack of documentation leaves the BOP unable to accurately determine the number of inmates with mental illness and ensure that it is providing appropriate care to them.

- **After the BOP adopted a new mental health policy, which increased the standards of care for inmates with mental illness, BOP data shows a 30 percent reduction in the number of inmates who receive regular mental health treatment.** Based on interviews with mental health staff and the OIG's review of BOP data, it appears that mental health staff may have reduced the number of inmates, including those in restrictive housing, who must receive regular mental health treatment because they did not have the necessary staffing resources to meet the policy's increased treatment standards.

The BOP has taken a number of steps to mitigate the mental health concerns for inmates in restrictive housing. These steps include diverting inmates with serious mental illness from traditional restrictive housing units into alternative programs, such as secure residential mental health treatment programs. While these are positive BOP initiatives, limited inmate capacities, slow inmate progression, high staffing needs, and a lack of formal performance metrics limit the programs' utility and the BOP's ability to expand their use to other institutions.

The report makes fifteen recommendations to the BOP to improve its screening, treatment, and monitoring of inmates with mental illness who are assigned to restrictive housing. The BOP concurred with all of the recommendations.

Report: Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2017/e1705.pdf>.

Multimedia: To accompany today's report, the OIG has released a 3-minute video featuring the Inspector General and a 7-minute podcast featuring members of the review team discussing the report's findings. The video, podcast, and downloadable transcripts of each are available at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/multimedia/video-07-12-17.htm#top>.