



"A Message from the Inspector General: Inspection of the BOP's Federal Correctional Institution Lewisburg," September 2024

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

In February of this year, my office conducted an unannounced inspection of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, or BOP's, facility in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. As we detail in a report released today, we identified several serious operational deficiencies at FCI Lewisburg.

Our prior oversight work has consistently highlighted how important it is to have appropriate staffing levels to ensure federal prisons are safe and secure, and that they are providing adequate medical and mental health care to inmates. We identified substantial staffing shortages at FCI Lewisburg that are likely to be exacerbated because of the prison's expanding mission. We also determined that there are varying estimates of the appropriate number of staff needed to support the institution's operations. Specifically, we found that a BOP hired contractor's staffing projections were significantly lower than FCI Lewisburg's own estimates of its staffing needs, particularly in Correctional Services. This substantial disparity raises concerns about the BOP's ability to reliably and effectively accomplish its missions at the institution.

We also identified concerns related to the quality of healthcare provided to inmates, including delays in blood tests for diabetic inmates and delays in preventive colorectal cancer screening. Additionally, we found that 15 inmates had their mental health medication prescriptions, including antidepressants, abruptly discontinued, rather than being tapered over 4 weeks as recommended by BOP clinical guidance. Such abrupt discontinuation can cause an inmate to experience antidepressant withdrawal and increase the risk of major depression relapse and suicide.

Additionally, we found that 18 percent of inmates in restrictive housing were in single-cell confinement despite BOP policy strongly discouraging the practice. Since 2017, my office has repeatedly raised concerns with single-celling inmates, particularly in restrictive housing, where inmates may spend up to 23 hours per day in their cells. Single-celled inmates may experience worsening mental health conditions, and are at an increased risk of suicide.

We also identified several concerns that could create a hostile work environment for BOP employees, which we detail in our report.

To read today's report and all of our findings, please visit our website, oig.justice.gov, or go to oversight.gov.

Thank you for joining me today.

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