

INSIDE OUT*A biweekly briefing on the federal prison system for families, defendants, and advocates* **Vol. 1 · No. 6 · Inmate Edition****Facility Closures, Six In-Custody Deaths, and a Tablet Rollout: What Families Need to Know**

This issue covers a dense five-week window in federal corrections. On July 1, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) — the agency that operates federal prisons — announced the closure of six institutions and operational changes at others, citing staffing and infrastructure problems. In the same window, the BOP posted six in-custody death notices from FCI Marion, FCI Sheridan, FCI Petersburg Medium, and FCI Marianna, and awarded a national contract to deploy inmate tablets across its facilities.

On the legal side, the U.S. Supreme Court closed its October 2025 term with a Fourth Amendment ruling on geofence warrants, and a federal appellate development narrowed the government's position on felon-in-possession prosecutions under 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1). The White House announced two nominations to the U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC), the independent agency that writes the federal sentencing guidelines, and a widely reported clemency plan did not materialize in the form initially described.

Below: a deep dive on the closure list and what it means for designation and transfers, a deep dive on the tablet contract, a deep dive on the cluster of in-custody deaths and next-of-kin procedures, a systemic-issues section on staffing and internal investigations, and quick hits on sentencing, courts, and policy. A practical tip closes the issue.

THIS WEEK'S LEAD**BOP Announces Six Facility Closures and Operational Changes**

Theme: facility closures / designation / transfers

On July 1, 2026, the BOP issued a press release announcing that it will close at least six federal prisons and make operational changes at others. The agency's stated reasons are staffing shortages and deteriorating physical plants. According to reporting by Forbes and Federal News Network summarizing the announcement, the closures are part of a broader retrenchment; the LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) has also covered the announcement and its practical implications. One affected facility is FCI La Tuna, a low-security institution near El Paso, Texas; U.S. Representative Veronica Escobar has publicly requested additional information from the BOP about the La Tuna decision.

For readers unfamiliar with the terminology: 'designation' is the BOP process that assigns a newly sentenced defendant to a specific institution, handled by the Designation and Sentence Computation Center (DSCC) in Grand Prairie, Texas. 'Transfer' refers to a movement between institutions after designation. When a facility closes, the population is redistributed to other institutions in the same or nearby regions, which can affect visitation distance, program availability, and custody-level placement (minimum, low, medium, high).

The practical effect for families is immediate. Anyone currently housed at or designated to a closing institution will be moved. Anyone in the pre-sentence phase whose counsel expected to request designation to a specific facility on the closure list needs to revisit that request. The BOP's press release and the LISA coverage indicate that the closures will reduce total federal bed capacity, which historically increases pressure on remaining facilities and can influence custody classification decisions.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY**Before incarceration****If you are awaiting self-surrender or designation**

If your attorney submitted a judicial recommendation under 18 U.S.C. § 3621(b) requesting a specific facility that appears on the closure list, that recommendation is now moot. Ask your attorney to file a supplemental letter to the sentencing judge and to the DSCC identifying an alternative facility that meets your custody-level needs and is geographically reasonable for family visitation.

When selecting an alternative, remember that the BOP considers five statutory factors under § 3621(b): the resources of the facility, the nature and circumstances of the offense, the history and characteristics of the prisoner, any statement by the sentencing court, and any pertinent Sentencing Commission policy statement. Requests that address these factors on the record carry more weight with the DSCC than generic geographic preferences.

If you have not yet been sentenced, this is a good moment to have your attorney check the current BOP facility list at bop.gov/locations and confirm the operational status of any institution you plan to name in a designation request.

During incarceration

If you or your loved one is currently housed at a closing facility

The BOP handles closure-driven transfers through case management. Ask the unit team — the case manager, counselor, and unit manager — where the receiving institution is expected to be and whether custody classification (the 'security level') will change with the move. Program participation records, including First Step Act (FSA) Earned Time Credit accruals, RDAP (Residential Drug Abuse Program) status, and vocational or education credits, should follow the person; verify that they do by requesting an updated FSA time credit assessment and a current Inmate Skills Development plan after the transfer.

Property is often lost or damaged during unplanned mass transfers. Document what you have before the move: TRULINCS commissary purchases, legal materials, correspondence, and personal photos. TRULINCS is the BOP's inmate email and account-management system. Copies of the account transaction history and commissary lists can be printed by staff on request and kept with your legal file.

For family members, phone contact and visitation will likely lapse for several weeks around a transfer. The BOP inmate locator at bop.gov/inmateloc is updated when the person arrives at the new institution; check daily during the transition window.

POLICY & REGULATORY REFERENCES

The primary statute governing BOP designation is 18 U.S.C. § 3621(b), which lists the five factors the BOP must consider when placing a person and provides that judicial recommendations are considered but not binding. BOP Program Statement 5100.08, 'Inmate Security Designation and Custody Classification,' operationalizes this statute; it sets out the scoring system that determines whether a person is designated minimum, low, medium, or high security, and the point deductions and 'management variables' that can move a placement.

Transfers between institutions after designation are governed by BOP Program Statement 5100.08 and by Program Statement 5140.44 for nearer-release transfers (transfers closer to the release destination). Under 28 C.F.R. § 542.14, an inmate who believes a designation or transfer decision violates policy may file an administrative remedy on Form BP-A0229 (BP-9) within 20 calendar days of the event, with escalation to the Regional Director on BP-A0230 (BP-10) and to the General Counsel on BP-A0231 (BP-11).

For FSA time credits, the governing provisions are 18 U.S.C. § 3632(d)(4) and 28 C.F.R. Part 523, Subpart E. FSA credits are earned for participation in Evidence-Based Recidivism Reduction programming and productive activities and are applied toward prerelease custody or supervised release. A transfer should not extinguish accrued credits, but families should verify the FSA time credit assessment after the move.

Congressional oversight of BOP operations flows through the House and Senate Judiciary Committees and the appropriations subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, Science. Requests for information about specific facility closures can be submitted through constituent services or directly to committee staff.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- Check bop.gov/locations and bop.gov/inmateloc weekly for status updates on any facility on the closure list; save screenshots of listing changes.
- If a designation letter or judicial recommendation named a closing facility, ask counsel to submit a supplemental § 3621(b) memo to the DSCC (Designation and Sentence Computation Center, Grand Prairie, TX) naming alternative facilities.
- For anyone currently housed at a closing facility with chronic medical needs, submit a written request via the electronic message system (formerly TRULINCS) or by hand to the Health Services Administrator that MDS records and medication orders be transmitted to the receiving institution.
- Print or request copies of the FSA time credit assessment, RDAP status, and Inmate Skills Development plan before any transfer, and re-request them after arrival at the new facility.

- Contact the constituent services office of your U.S. Representative or Senator with the person's full name, register number, and current facility to open a case file that can be used to press for transfer information.
- File a BP-A0229 (BP-9) within 20 calendar days if a transfer decision violates a stated policy — for example, if a nearer-release transfer request under Program Statement 5140.44 was ignored.

SOURCES

- [FBOP Announces Facility Closures and Operational Changes](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- [Federal Prisons to Close! \(Well, Only Some of Them\) – Update for July 2, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)
- [Bureau of Prisons to close six institutions, citing 'extreme staffing challenges'](#) — Federal News Network
- [Bureau Of Prisons Announces Multiple Facility Closings Citing Budget](#) — Forbes
- [Congresswoman Escobar Demands More Information on La Tuna Closure from BOP](#) — Office of Rep. Veronica Escobar

DEEP DIVE 2

BOP Posts Four In-Custody Death Notices Across Four Institutions

Theme: in-custody deaths / notification / next of kin

Between June 26 and July 6, 2026, the BOP published four public death notices: FCI Marianna (June 26), FCI Sheridan and FCI Petersburg Medium (both June 29), and FCI Marion (July 6). The BOP publishes these notices in accordance with the First Step Act's transparency requirements. Each notice typically identifies the person, the date of death, and states that the cause is pending determination by outside medical or investigative authorities.

An in-custody death — meaning the death of a person in the physical custody of the BOP — triggers several parallel processes: notification of next of kin by the institution, review by the BOP's Office of Internal Affairs and, in many cases, the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, and, where applicable, a state coroner or medical examiner's investigation. Under the Death in Custody Reporting Act (34 U.S.C. § 60105), the BOP is also required to report in-custody deaths to the U.S. Attorney General with specified information.

For families, the immediate practical questions are: how do we learn what happened, how do we recover personal property and remains, and what records can we obtain? Federal Correctional Institutions (FCIs) are BOP-operated prisons that hold low- and medium-security populations; the four facilities named above range across the country and are of varying custody levels.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

During incarceration

If you are incarcerated and have witnessed or been affected by a death on your unit

A death on the housing unit typically triggers a lockdown and interviews by the Special Investigative Service (SIS). SIS is the BOP's internal investigative arm at each institution. You are not required to make a statement, but you should be aware that anything you do say may be used in disciplinary or referral proceedings. If you wish to have counsel involved, you can and should ask.

Grief and acute stress reactions after a death on the unit are common. Request a Psychology Services encounter through the electronic message system or the sick-call process; encounters are documented in the medical record and can support later mental-health accommodations. RDAP participants who have been sober may be at increased relapse risk after a traumatic event and should ask their Drug Abuse Program Coordinator (DAPC) for a check-in.

If you have specific factual information about the circumstances of the death — for example, you saw staff response times or witnessed medical distress that was not addressed — you can report it through the BOP administrative remedy process using Form BP-A0229 (BP-9) or directly to the DOJ Office of the Inspector General hotline at oig.justice.gov.

POLICY & REGULATORY REFERENCES

BOP Program Statement 5553.06 governs escape and death notifications and specifies internal notification chains. The Death in Custody Reporting Act, 34 U.S.C. § 60105, requires reporting of in-custody deaths to the

U.S. Attorney General on a quarterly basis with specified data elements (time, manner, and circumstances of death).

Medical care standards inside BOP facilities are set by BOP Program Statement 6031.05, 'Patient Care.' Emergency response is addressed in Program Statement 6270.01, 'Medical Designations and Referral Services.' These are the internal standards against which a family or counsel evaluating a death might measure the institution's response.

FOIA requests to the BOP are submitted through foia.bop.gov. Privacy Act requests for the decedent's records require documentation of the requester's relationship to the decedent. Records held by DOJ OIG are requested separately through DOJ's FOIA portal. Autopsy reports, where the state medical examiner performs the autopsy, are typically obtained from the state agency, not the BOP.

For compassionate release motions still pending at the time of death, counsel should file a suggestion of death under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 25(a); some courts have addressed related equitable questions when a motion was pending and the defendant died before ruling.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- On receipt of a death notification, ask the caller to send a written follow-up naming the institution's point of contact, the location of the remains, and the identity of the pathologist or medical examiner performing the autopsy.
- Obtain a certified death certificate from the state where the death occurred (not from the BOP), which is required for most subsequent requests.
- Submit a Privacy Act / FOIA request to foia.bop.gov for the decedent's central file, medical file, and any incident or SIS reports; include a copy of the death certificate and any letter of administration.
- If considering civil action, file Standard Form 95 (SF-95) with the BOP within two years of the death to preserve Federal Tort Claims Act rights.
- Contact the DOJ Office of the Inspector General at oig.justice.gov if there are specific concerns about staff response or medical care.
- For a currently incarcerated witness to a death on the unit, request a Psychology Services encounter through the institution's electronic message system and keep a personal note of the date requested.

SOURCES

- [Death at FCI Marion](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- [Death at FCI Sheridan](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- [Death at FCI Petersburg Medium](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- [Death at FCI Marianna](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons

DEEP DIVE 3

BOP Awards National Inmate Tablet Contract

Theme: tablets / communications / commissary

On July 8, 2026, the BOP announced the award of a national contract to deploy inmate tablets across the federal prison system. According to BOP's press release and reporting from Forbes, Fox News, and ABC News, the tablets are expected to provide messaging, educational content, and additional communication features. The rollout is national in scope but will be phased across institutions.

Inmate tablets are handheld devices, typically without open internet access, that are configured to run vendor-provided applications for approved services such as electronic messaging (an evolution of the TRULINCS email system), music, books, educational modules, and — in some prior state and federal deployments — video visitation and phone calls. The BOP has not published the full technical specifications or the fee schedule at this point, and pricing is one of the material variables families should watch as the rollout proceeds.

For families and incarcerated readers, the practical questions are: when will your facility receive tablets, what will the services cost, how will costs interact with the Inmate Trust Account and commissary spending limits, and what content or communications will be monitored and retained by the agency.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

During incarceration

What tablet access is likely to look like on the unit

In comparable federal and state deployments, tablets are personal devices assigned to an inmate for the duration of their custody at that institution. They are typically checked out from the unit team or purchased through commissary, and content is loaded through unit-level charging kiosks or Wi-Fi hotspots configured to the vendor's servers.

Messaging on a tablet operates under the same monitoring rules as the current electronic messaging system: content is subject to review, retained by the vendor and the BOP, and can be used in disciplinary or investigative proceedings. Phone calls, if included, are monitored under the same terms as institutional phones. Attorney communications require the same protective procedures currently in place for legal calls and legal mail; a tablet does not automatically create attorney-client privilege for messages sent through the vendor system.

If a tablet is damaged, lost, or confiscated as contraband (for example, if modifications are attempted), replacement or restoration will typically be at the inmate's expense and may involve a disciplinary process under 28 C.F.R. Part 541 (BOP inmate discipline).

POLICY & REGULATORY REFERENCES

BOP Program Statement 4500.12, 'Trust Fund/Warehouse/Laundry Manual,' governs Inmate Trust Account operations, deposits, and disbursements for commissary and communication services. BOP Program Statement 5265.14, 'Correspondence,' and Program Statement 5264.08, 'Inmate Telephone Regulations,' govern current communication rules and the monitoring framework that will apply to tablet services.

Inmate discipline is governed by 28 C.F.R. Part 541 and Program Statement 5270.09. Prohibited acts related to communication and electronic devices are enumerated in the regulation's Tables 1 and 2. FSA time credit eligibility can be affected by certain disciplinary findings under 18 U.S.C. § 3632(d)(4)(D) and 28 C.F.R. § 523.42.

Procurement of the tablet system falls under Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) rules. Contract terms including pricing, monitoring specifications, and data retention will become discoverable through FOIA requests to the BOP once the contract documentation is releasable. Congressional oversight materials, particularly appropriations committee reports, are another avenue for pricing and rollout schedule information.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- Ask the unit team, in writing through the electronic message system, when tablets will arrive at the specific institution and what the fee schedule will be.
- Confirm with the person incarcerated that attorney-client communications continue to use scheduled legal calls, in-person visits, and legal mail — not tablet messaging.
- Request a current Inmate Trust Account statement from the unit team monthly during the rollout and track cost changes against prior baselines.
- Save a written or screenshot record of any published fee schedule when it becomes available; fees can change and prior schedules are useful for later disputes.
- If a tablet is lost, damaged, or confiscated and a replacement or disciplinary charge follows, file Form BP-A0288 (Administrative Remedy Informal Resolution) with the unit team within 20 days of the incident, then BP-A0229 (BP-9) if not resolved.
- For counsel, add tablet-related preservation language to any litigation hold letters, including message logs and voice recordings retained by the vendor.

SOURCES

- [BOP Awards Transformational Inmate Tablet Contract](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- [Federal Bureau Of Prisons Rolling Out E-Tablets](#) — Forbes

- [Federal inmates may soon get tablets with messaging capabilities as Bureau of Prisons makes modernization push](#) — Fox News
- [Federal inmates could soon have their own tablets in prison](#) — ABC News

Systemic Issues Inside Out Is Watching

Patterns the publication is tracking this week from source material and court filings. Each entry includes factual description of the pattern and concrete guidance for readers affected by it.

Staffing shortages driving both closures and operational changes

PATTERN

The BOP's own July 1 announcement, followed by trade and general-press reporting and analysis from the LISA Newsletter, identifies staffing as a primary driver of the closure list and of operational changes at facilities that remain open. Separately, a coalition including Right On Crime has publicly urged Congress to fully fund the BOP.

The practical footprint of the staffing pattern for readers: increased use of augmentation (non-custody staff pulled to correctional posts), reduced program availability, longer waits for medical and dental appointments, and, at some institutions, restrictions on visitation days or hours. Program interruptions can affect FSA time credit earning if the interruption is characterized as a lack of programming rather than a refusal to participate.

WHAT FAMILIES AND DEFENDANTS CAN DO

If FSA time credit accrual appears to have stalled because programming was unavailable, ask the unit team in writing to record 'programming unavailable' rather than 'not participating' in the FSA time credit assessment. If that fails, file Form BP-A0288 (informal resolution) and, if unresolved within 20 days, BP-A0229 (BP-9). For visitation reductions, request the current visiting schedule in writing and check the facility's page on [bop.gov](#). Attorneys can seek FOIA production of unit-level programming rosters when preparing supervised release, compassionate release, or resentencing arguments that rely on the person's program record.

SOURCES

- [FBOP Announces Facility Closures and Operational Changes](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- [Right On Crime Joins Coalition Urging Congress to Fully Fund Federal Bureau of Prisons](#) — Right On Crime
- [Federal Prisons to Close! \(Well, Only Some of Them\) – Update for July 2, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)

Internal investigations and SIS conduct

PATTERN

The LISA Newsletter's July 7 coverage discusses a case involving the BOP's Special Investigative Service (SIS) — the internal investigative arm at each institution — in which the investigator became the subject of an investigation. The pattern of interest for readers is the layered oversight of SIS itself: internal by the Office of Internal Affairs, external by the DOJ Office of the Inspector General, and, for criminal referrals, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the district containing the facility.

For incarcerated readers, SIS interviews and confidential informant use continue to influence disciplinary hearings, transfer decisions, and Special Housing Unit (SHU) placements, and the internal record generated by SIS often is not shared with the subject of the investigation.

WHAT FAMILIES AND DEFENDANTS CAN DO

If SHU placement follows an SIS interview, ask for the Detention Order under 28 C.F.R. § 541.25 within 24 hours; it should identify the reason for placement. If the Detention Order references an ongoing SIS investigation with no further detail, the person can request weekly review under 28 C.F.R. § 541.26 and, after 30 days, a Regional Director review. Counsel can seek DOJ OIG referral if there is a specific factual basis to believe SIS misconduct is at issue; parallel civil counsel should preserve investigative materials through targeted litigation-hold letters.

SOURCES

- [SIS Lieutenant Meets the Enemy... In the Mirror – Update for July 7, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)

Sentencing & Courts

Trump Picks Two for Sentencing Commission – Update for July 10, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-07-10

The U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC) is the independent agency that promulgates the federal sentencing guidelines and votes on amendments each cycle. The White House has nominated U.S. District Judge John Cronan (S.D.N.Y.) and Jason Manion to the Commission, as reported by the LISA Newsletter. Senate confirmation is required for the seats to be filled. Practical effect for readers: pending guideline amendment cycles, including any actions on 'compassionate release' policy statements under USSG § 1B1.13, depend on a quorum, so confirmation timing matters for anyone with a § 3582(c)(1)(A) motion under consideration.

'Fencing' With the 4th Amendment – Update for July 6, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-07-06

The Supreme Court issued its final criminal decision of the October 2025 term, addressing whether a geofence warrant — a warrant seeking location data for all devices in a specified area at a specified time — is a Fourth Amendment search, as reported by the LISA Newsletter. For federal defendants whose cases involved geofence data or similar bulk-location requests, counsel should review whether the ruling opens a suppression or post-conviction argument in their case. Anyone with a pending direct appeal should raise the issue promptly; anyone in a post-conviction posture should discuss the retroactivity landscape with counsel.

A Kick In the Fundament for Felon-in-Possession? – Update for June 30, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-06-30

The LISA Newsletter covers a development affecting felon-in-possession prosecutions under 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1). Practical effect: individuals with a § 922(g)(1) conviction whose direct appeals remain open, or who are within the timing window for a motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255, should review the underlying decision with counsel to determine whether it supports an argument in their case.

Federal bail and sentencing reforms targeting copper theft become law

WestCentralOnline · 2026-07-07

Federal legislation directed at copper and metal theft, including bail and sentencing provisions, has been enacted. For defendants charged with metal-theft offenses that cross into federal jurisdiction, counsel should identify the specific statute cited in the indictment and check whether the newly enacted provisions apply to conduct after the effective date.

Policy & Legislation

Another Lucy Football for Clemency – Update for July 9, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-07-09

A widely reported plan for a large clemency initiative — described in earlier reporting as a potential set of 250 pardons — did not materialize on the scale initially described, as covered by the LISA Newsletter. Practical effect for readers: applications for executive clemency continue to be processed through the Office of the Pardon Attorney (justice.gov/pardon), and eligibility, waiting periods, and application requirements remain unchanged. Anyone considering an application should focus on completing the standard petition process rather than waiting for a broader action.

Todd Blanche Slips One by Us – Update for June 29, 2026

The LISA Newsletter reports on a recent update to a BOP Program Statement — the internal policy documents that operationalize federal regulations across BOP facilities. Program Statement updates change the day-to-day rules under which incarcerated people live and can affect designation, discipline, and program access. Readers whose specific programs (RDAP, FSA productive activities, faith-based programming) are governed by an updated Program Statement should ask the unit team for the current version and compare it to the version that governed at the time of any prior decision.

Right On Crime Joins Coalition Urging Congress to Fully Fund Federal Bureau of Prisons

Right On Crime · 2026-07-09

A coalition including Right On Crime has publicly urged Congress to fully fund the BOP in the pending appropriations process. Readers monitoring the closure list and staffing pattern can track this through the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, Science, whose committee reports are the standard source for BOP funding priorities in each fiscal year.

PRACTICAL TIP

Post-Independence Day mail and visitation timing

Independence Day fell on Friday, July 3, 2026 (observed), and mail volume through BOP mailrooms typically remains slower for one to two weeks afterward. If you sent legal mail or personal correspondence around the holiday, ask the incarcerated person to confirm receipt through the electronic message system before assuming loss. For visitation, check the current visiting schedule on the specific facility's page at bop.gov, because summer schedules and staffing at some institutions have been affected by the recent closure announcement.

A useful summer habit: once a month, ask the unit team for a printed copy of the FSA time credit assessment, the Inmate Trust Account statement, and the current Individualized Needs Plan. These three documents together give an accurate picture of programming, finances, and release-planning status, and they are the documents most often needed on short notice when a transfer, disciplinary hearing, or release decision arises.

Inside Out will return in two weeks with continued coverage of the facility closure implementation, the tablet rollout schedule as it becomes public, and any USSC nomination developments. Readers who need further assistance navigating a specific federal-prison matter can reach [DrPrison.org](https://drprison.org) at help@drprison.org.

NEED FURTHER ASSISTANCE?

Readers navigating a specific federal-prison matter — a designation question, a halfway house issue, an administrative remedy, a compassionate release motion — can reach [DrPrison.org](https://drprison.org) directly at help@drprison.org. Inside Out is a free service; no subscription required.

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