INSIDE OUT
A biweekly briefing on the federal prison system for families, defendants, and advocates

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Inside Out — Week of November 27, 2026: Death at MDC Guaynabo, FSA Office Convenes, Union Contract Fight, and Year-End Clemency

This issue covers developments between November 13 and November 27, 2026. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) announced a death in custody at MDC Guaynabo in Puerto Rico, held the inaugural meeting of its newly consolidated First Step Act Office, and renewed its effort to terminate the master collective bargaining agreement with the Council of Prison Locals, the union representing roughly 30,000 BOP staff. The Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) again named BOP to its annual list of top management challenges, and reporting from Newsweek summarized OIG findings that medical failures were documented in a substantial share of federal prison deaths classified as 'natural.'

On the sentencing and post-conviction side, the U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC) added staff expertise in advance of its next amendment cycle, the Supreme Court further narrowed the availability of damages claims against federal prison officials under Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents, and appellate courts continued to refine the prejudice standard for 28 U.S.C. § 2255 motions. The annual presidential pardon window is also open, with roughly 20,000 pending clemency petitions on file.

Below: deep dives on the death at MDC Guaynabo and in-custody medical oversight, the stand-up of the FSA Office and what it signals for Earned Time Credit (ETC) administration, and the state of federal clemency as year-end approaches. Quick hits cover the union contract dispute, § 2255 prejudice doctrine, supervised-release reductions, and Bivens. A practical tip addresses post-Thanksgiving visitation and phone congestion.

THIS WEEK'S LEAD

Death Announced at MDC Guaynabo as OIG Findings on In-Custody Medical Care Draw Renewed Attention

Theme: deaths / custody / medical oversight

On November 21, 2026, BOP issued a press release reporting the death of an individual in custody at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) Guaynabo, a federal pretrial and holdover facility in Puerto Rico that houses people awaiting trial, sentencing, or designation to a long-term facility. Under BOP practice, deaths in custody are referred to the FBI and the DOJ OIG for review, and the cause of death is typically listed as pending until autopsy and investigation are complete.

The announcement arrived the same week as reporting summarizing OIG work on in-custody deaths. According to Newsweek's coverage of the OIG findings, medical care failures were identified in roughly 45 percent of federal prison deaths that BOP had classified as 'natural.' The OIG has separately listed BOP health services and staffing as a top DOJ management challenge for the 2026 reporting cycle, as noted in Forbes coverage this month.

For families, the immediate practical issue is notification, access to records, and understanding the review process that follows a death in custody. For people currently incarcerated — particularly those with chronic medical conditions — the practical issue is documenting sick-call requests and ensuring that medical needs are recorded in BOP's electronic health record system.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

Family, friends & advocates
What to expect after a death-in-custody notification
When someone dies in BOP custody, the facility's Chaplain's Office or Warden's designee typically contacts the next of kin listed in the incarcerated person's central file. Families who believe they should be the point of contact but have not been reached can call the facility's main line and ask for the Chaplain or Executive Assistant to the Warden. Written confirmation of the death, the date, and the facility can be requested in the same call.

An autopsy is generally performed, and the cause of death in the public BOP release often remains 'pending' for weeks or months. Families can request a copy of the autopsy report from the medical examiner of jurisdiction (for MDC Guaynabo, the Puerto Rico Institute of Forensic Sciences) once it is finalized. BOP

medical records and the decedent's central file can be requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act, though release to family members depends on the requester's legal relationship to the decedent and may require a certified death certificate and proof of estate authority.

If a family believes the death involved a failure of care, an OIG complaint can be filed at oig.justice.gov/hotline, and a tort claim may be initiated under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) using Standard Form 95 within two years of the death. Consulting a lawyer experienced in federal prison litigation is advisable before the two-year window closes.

During incarceration

Documenting medical needs while in custody

The OIG findings on 'natural' deaths underscore the importance of a written medical paper trail. Every sick-call request should be submitted in writing through the facility's established process — commonly a BP-A0575 Inmate Request to Staff ('cop-out') directed to Health Services, or the electronic sick-call system where available. Keep copies when possible, and ask unit staff to note submissions in the record.

If a medical issue is not addressed, the Administrative Remedy Program (28 C.F.R. §§ 542.10–.19) provides a four-step escalation: an informal BP-8 to the unit team, a formal BP-9 to the Warden, a BP-10 to the Regional Office, and a BP-11 to the Central Office General Counsel. Documented exhaustion of this process is a prerequisite to most federal court claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a). For urgent conditions, requests to Health Services can also be routed through the Clinical Director, whose name is posted on the Health Services bulletin board at each facility.

Families on the outside can reinforce the record by calling the Warden's office or Health Services Administrator when a loved one reports a serious medical problem, and by sending a dated letter summarizing the concern. Phone logs and mail logs create independent evidence that the issue was raised.

Attorneys & prison officials

Review pathways and preservation of claims

Counsel representing families of people who die in BOP custody should move quickly to preserve records. A written preservation letter to the Warden, Regional Counsel, and the BOP Central Office General Counsel identifying the decedent, date of death, and categories of records (medical, housing, disciplinary, incident reports, video) can forestall routine destruction under BOP record schedules. FOIA requests to the BOP FOIA/Privacy Act Section should be filed in parallel, with a Privacy Act release from the estate's personal representative.

FTCA claims (28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2671–2680) require administrative presentment on SF-95 to BOP within two years. Bivens claims against individual federal employees are substantially narrower following recent Supreme Court decisions discussed in this issue's quick hits, and are generally no longer viable for Eighth Amendment medical-care theories outside the specific Carlson v. Green context. State-law claims against contract medical providers may remain available depending on the facility.

For institutional advocates, the OIG's recurring findings on BOP medical staffing and clinical decision-making provide background that may be useful in supporting compassionate release motions under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) for individuals with serious conditions, where arguments about the adequacy of in-custody care are relevant to the 'extraordinary and compelling reasons' analysis.

POLICY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES

Deaths in BOP custody are governed by BOP Program Statement 5553.08 (Escapes/Deaths Notification) and related internal procedures requiring notification of the FBI, OIG, and next of kin. Medical care standards are set out in BOP Program Statement 6031.04 (Patient Care) and Program Statement 6010.05 (Health Services Administration), which together describe the sick-call process, chronic care clinics, and clinical encounters that create the records relevant to any later review. The Administrative Remedy Program is codified at 28 C.F.R. §§ 542.10–.19; the Warden has 20 calendar days to respond to a BP-9, the Regional Director has 30 days for a BP-10, and the General Counsel has 40 days for a BP-11, with one permitted extension at each level. The Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b) and 2671–2680, provides the exclusive damages remedy for most medical-negligence claims against BOP; the two-year administrative presentment deadline is

jurisdictional. FOIA requests under 5 U.S.C. § 552 and Privacy Act requests under 5 U.S.C. § 552a are processed by the BOP FOIA/PA Section; fee waivers are available for public-interest requests. Compassionate release motions under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i) and USSG § 1B1.13 (as amended effective November 1, 2023) recognize serious medical conditions and inadequate care as potential bases for sentence reduction.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- If you are the point of contact for someone at MDC Guaynabo or any BOP facility, confirm that the facility has your current phone number and address by calling the Chaplain's Office and asking that the central file 'notification' entry be updated.
- For any serious or chronic medical issue in custody, submit a written BP-A0575 Inmate Request to Staff to Health Services and keep a dated copy; if there is no response within 10 business days, file a BP-8 with the unit team.
- Families concerned about care should send a dated letter to the Warden and Health Services Administrator summarizing the concern, and keep the mailing receipt.
- To report a suspected medical-care failure, file an OIG complaint at oig.justice.gov/hotline and keep the confirmation number.
- After a death in custody, request the autopsy from the medical examiner of jurisdiction and file a FOIA/Privacy Act request with BOP for medical and incident records; consult counsel about FTCA presentment on Standard Form 95 well before the two-year deadline.

SOURCES

- Death at MDC Guaynabo — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- Medical Failures Found in 45 Percent of Federal Prison 'Natural' Deaths — Newsweek
- Federal Bureau Of Prisons On DOJ's List Of Top Challenges, Again — Forbes
- A federal women's prison became a 'rape club.' After officials shut it down, rampant abuse continued elsewhere — Dallas Observer

DEEP DIVE 2

BOP's First Step Act Office Convenes for Its Inaugural Meeting

Theme: First Step Act / FSA Office / ETC administration

On November 18, 2026, BOP announced that its newly consolidated First Step Act (FSA) Office held its inaugural meeting. The FSA Office is the internal BOP unit charged with implementing the First Step Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-391), including the risk and needs assessment known as PATTERN (the Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risk and Needs), the Earned Time Credit (ETC) system that allows eligible individuals to earn up to 15 days of credit per 30 days of successful programming, and the designation of approved Evidence-Based Recidivism Reduction (EBRR) programs and Productive Activities (PAs).

For people in custody and their families, the stand-up of a centralized FSA Office is relevant because inconsistent application of ETC earning and application has been a persistent source of administrative remedy filings and litigation. BOP's announcement describes the office as the point of coordination for FSA policy guidance, programming inventory, and PATTERN scoring. Operational details — including whether the office will issue a public implementation schedule or revised Program Statement — were not included in the announcement.

This week also produced continued reporting, including from Reason magazine, on individuals who remain incarcerated under sentences Congress has since modified, raising questions about how FSA-related relief is being administered in practice.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

During incarceration

How to check your ETC posture now

Every eligible person in BOP custody should have an FSA Time Credit Assessment in their electronic file, updated at least annually at team. The assessment shows the PATTERN score (Minimum, Low, Medium, or

High recidivism risk), the ETC earning rate (10 or 15 days per 30 days of programming, depending on PATTERN level and consecutive assessments), and the running total of credits earned and applied.

Ask your Case Manager at your next unit team meeting for a printed copy of your most recent FSA Time Credit Assessment and your sentence computation (SENTRY printout). Compare the dates against your own log of EBRR and PA participation. Discrepancies are the single most common source of unapplied credits and are the issue the FSA Office has been consolidated to address.

If you believe credits have been miscalculated, raise the specific discrepancy in writing on a BP-A0575 cop-out to the Case Manager and Unit Manager first. If not resolved, escalate through the Administrative Remedy Program (BP-8 through BP-11). Document dates and keep copies of everything.

Family, friends & advocates

What families can ask for and when

Families cannot access FSA records directly without a release, but they can help by keeping an outside copy of the loved one's programming log and release-date math. Ask your loved one at each call to share the latest FSA Time Credit Assessment figures and the projected date of transfer to Residential Reentry Center (RRC, commonly called a halfway house) or Home Confinement (HC).

If an expected RRC or HC date passes without placement, the Residential Reentry Management (RRM) office responsible for the facility's region is the next point of contact. RRM contact information is published on bop.gov under 'Locations.' Letters to the RRM identifying the individual by name and register number, the current facility, and the expected placement date create a written record.

Before incarceration

FSA eligibility and programming before self-surrender

Pre-sentence and pre-self-surrender readers should understand that ETC eligibility is determined by offense of conviction, not by security level. The list of offenses that render a person ineligible to earn credits (though still eligible to earn 'time toward programming') is at 18 U.S.C. § 3632(d)(4)(D). Sex offenses, certain terrorism offenses, and some violent crimes are on that list.

If you are eligible, programming begins at your designated facility. Your initial PATTERN assessment is typically conducted within 28 days of arrival. The programming you complete before your first annual team meeting determines your initial credit balance. Ask counsel to confirm your eligibility and, where relevant, to raise programming recommendations at sentencing so that the BOP's initial needs assessment is informed.

Attorneys & prison officials

Points of leverage in FSA litigation

Counsel handling FSA disputes should be aware that ETC claims are generally pursued through administrative exhaustion followed by 28 U.S.C. § 2241 petitions in the district of confinement. Courts have divided on whether specific programming must be made available to a given individual, and on the application of credits to pre-FSA sentences. The consolidation of FSA functions in a single office creates a more defined administrative record and may make exhaustion more efficient.

For Compassionate release motions under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i), uncredited FSA time can be a relevant factor in the 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) analysis, particularly where the uncredited time would materially affect release date calculations.

POLICY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES

The First Step Act of 2018, Public Law 115-391, created the ETC system codified at 18 U.S.C. §§ 3632(d)(4) and 3624(g). The implementing regulation is 28 C.F.R. Part 523, Subpart D (Earned Time Credits), which defines eligible EBRR programs and PAs and sets out how credits are earned and applied. BOP policy guidance is contained in BOP Program Statement 5410.01 (First Step Act Time Credits) and Program Statement 5400.01 (Risk and Needs Assessment System — PATTERN). PATTERN scoring and reassessment procedures are described in DOJ's published PATTERN reports available at nij.ojp.gov. Credits are applied either toward prerelease custody (RRC or HC under 18 U.S.C. § 3624(g)(2)) or toward early

transfer to supervised release (§ 3624(g)(3)) when the individual has at least 12 months remaining and is Minimum or Low PATTERN risk. Ineligible offenses are listed at 18 U.S.C. § 3632(d)(4)(D). Disputes over earning and application are pursued through the Administrative Remedy Program (28 C.F.R. §§ 542.10–.19) and, after exhaustion, by petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 in the district of confinement.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- At your next unit team meeting, request a printed copy of your FSA Time Credit Assessment and your SENTRY sentence computation; compare them against your own programming log.
- If credits appear miscalculated, file a BP-A0575 cop-out to your Case Manager identifying the specific programs and dates at issue; keep a dated copy.
- If informal resolution fails within 20 days, file a BP-9 with the Warden; track the 20/30/40-day statutory response windows at each subsequent level.
- Confirm your offense of conviction against the ineligible-offense list at 18 U.S.C. § 3632(d)(4)(D) so that any eligibility dispute is based on the correct statute and subsection.
- Families should keep an outside copy of the loved one's current FSA Time Credit Assessment figures and projected RRC/HC date, and know the RRM contact for the region.
- Counsel considering § 2241 petitions should fully document administrative exhaustion and attach the specific BOP computations challenged.

SOURCES

- First Step Act Office Holds Inaugural Meeting — Federal Bureau of Prisons
- Why prisoners continue to serve sentences that Congress has deemed unjust — Reason Magazine
- Spotlight on the NIC Academy Division — Federal Bureau of Prisons

DEEP DIVE 3

Year-End Clemency Window: What the Pending-Petition Backlog Means for Applicants

Theme: clemency / pardons / year-end

The LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates), which tracks federal criminal justice developments, reported this week on the scheduled annual presidential turkey pardon and noted that approximately 20,000 clemency petitions — covering both current and former federal prisoners seeking commutation (reduction of sentence) or pardon (post-sentence relief from collateral consequences) — are pending with the Office of the Pardon Attorney (OPA) at the Department of Justice.

For readers, the practical question is not the ceremony but the mechanics of the petition pipeline. Petitions are filed with OPA, investigated by OPA staff with input from the sentencing court and prosecutor, reviewed by DOJ, and ultimately forwarded with a recommendation to the White House Counsel's Office. Grants are typically clustered near year-end and at the end of a presidential term, but petitions filed now will not ordinarily be adjudicated within the current calendar year.

This deep dive sets out the filing standards, timing expectations, and the parallel pathway of compassionate release under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i), which is adjudicated in federal district court rather than through the executive branch.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

During incarceration

Commutation versus compassionate release

A commutation petition filed with OPA asks the President to reduce or end a sentence; it is a matter of executive clemency and has no fixed timeline. A compassionate release motion under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i) asks the sentencing judge to reduce a sentence for 'extraordinary and compelling reasons'; it has a 30-day administrative exhaustion requirement (a request first to the Warden) and then is decided in district court.

For most people with serious medical conditions, age-based grounds, family circumstances, or significant changes in sentencing law, the compassionate release pathway is faster and more predictable than clemency. The two pathways are not mutually exclusive; a person may pursue both. OPA Form Petition for Commutation of Sentence is available at justice.gov/pardon.

Family, friends & advocates

Supporting a clemency petition from the outside

Family and community support letters are a routine and important part of a commutation file. Letters should be addressed to the Pardon Attorney, identify the petitioner by name and Bureau register number, describe the writer's relationship, and address rehabilitation, family hardship, employment prospects, housing on release, and any specific programming the petitioner has completed in custody. Short, specific, first-person letters carry more weight than form letters.

Families can also help by assembling an organized packet: BOP programming transcripts (requested through the unit team), disciplinary history (requested through the unit team or FOIA), medical records relevant to any health-based claim, and letters from employers, clergy, mentors, and treatment providers. Keep a copy of everything mailed to OPA.

Attorneys & prison officials

Filing strategy and parallel tracks

Counsel evaluating clemency should consider filing in parallel with any available compassionate release motion, resentencing under retroactive Guidelines amendments, and First Step Act § 404 crack-cocaine relief where applicable. The USSC's November 2023 amendment to USSG § 1B1.13 broadened recognized categories of 'extraordinary and compelling reasons' and may offer a faster route for medical, age-based, caregiver, and 'unusually long sentence' claims.

For clemency specifically, OPA's published standards favor petitions that demonstrate acceptance of responsibility, substantial rehabilitation, and a concrete reentry plan. Prior denials do not bar refiling after a waiting period (generally two years). Petitions should be filed on OPA's current form; incomplete petitions are routinely returned.

POLICY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES

The clemency power derives from Article II, § 2, clause 1 of the Constitution. Regulations governing petitions are at 28 C.F.R. §§ 1.1–1.11 (Executive Clemency), and are administered by the Office of the Pardon Attorney under DOJ. Commutation petitions require a minimum waiting period (generally five years after conviction or a showing of good cause to waive); pardon petitions require a minimum five-year waiting period after release from confinement. Compassionate release is codified at 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i) and implemented through USSG § 1B1.13 (as amended November 1, 2023), which now expressly recognizes medical circumstances, age, family circumstances, victims of abuse in custody, 'other reasons' of comparable gravity, and 'unusually long sentences' as potential bases. Exhaustion requires a written request to the Warden under BOP Program Statement 5050.50 (Compassionate Release/Reduction in Sentence); if the Warden does not act within 30 days, the motion may be filed directly in the sentencing court. First Step Act § 404 permits resentencing for certain pre-2010 crack cocaine offenses.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- Potential clemency applicants should download the current Petition for Commutation of Sentence form at justice.gov/pardon and begin assembling supporting materials; file when the petition is complete rather than rushing an incomplete submission.
- Before or alongside a commutation petition, evaluate whether compassionate release under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i) is available; the Warden request is the first required step.
- Family members writing support letters should address them to the Pardon Attorney, identify the petitioner by register number, and focus on specific, first-person observations about rehabilitation and reentry plans.

- Request BOP programming transcripts and disciplinary history through the unit team now; these documents strengthen both clemency and compassionate release filings.
- Counsel should calendar the five-year waiting periods and confirm eligibility before filing; petitions filed in error are routinely returned.

SOURCES

- Annual Pardon Farce Scheduled – Update for November 23, 2026 — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)
- Serving Up Some BOP-Related Side Dishes – Update for November 24, 2026 — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)

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.

Medical oversight in deaths classified as 'natural'

PATTERN

This issue's sources describe a recurring pattern in which OIG reviews identify failures of care in a substantial share of federal prison deaths that BOP initially classified as resulting from natural causes. Reporting this week put the figure at approximately 45 percent in the reviewed cohort. Coverage of OIG's 2026 top management challenges list also places health services staffing and clinical decision-making among BOP's identified challenges.

The pattern matters because the initial classification of a death affects what records are generated, what review is triggered, and what information is provided to families.

WHAT FAMILIES AND DEFENDANTS CAN DO

For people in custody with chronic conditions, maintain a written record of every sick-call request, medication refusal, and clinical encounter, and raise unresolved issues through BP-8 through BP-11. For families, request medical records under the Privacy Act after any serious in-custody medical event, and preserve the right to file an FTCA claim by presenting a Standard Form 95 to BOP within two years of injury or death. OIG complaints can be filed at oig.justice.gov/hotline.

SOURCES

- Medical Failures Found in 45 Percent of Federal Prison 'Natural' Deaths — Newsweek
- Federal Bureau Of Prisons On DOJ's List Of Top Challenges, Again — Forbes
- Death at MDC Guaynabo — Federal Bureau of Prisons

Narrowing damages remedies against federal corrections officials

PATTERN

LISA's November 20 update describes continued appellate contraction of Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents, the 1971 Supreme Court decision that recognized an implied damages remedy for constitutional violations by federal officials. Recent terms have further limited Bivens claims to the specific factual contexts of the original case trilogy, with courts routinely dismissing new 'contexts' including most federal prison conditions and medical-care claims. The practical effect is that civil-damages suits against individual federal corrections officials have become substantially harder to sustain.

WHAT FAMILIES AND DEFENDANTS CAN DO

People injured in federal custody and their counsel should evaluate the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2671–2680) as the primary damages pathway for most negligence claims, with Standard Form 95

presentment to BOP within two years. Injunctive relief remains available in some circumstances. Preserve records early, exhaust the Administrative Remedy Program (28 C.F.R. §§ 542.10–.19) as a protective matter, and consult counsel experienced in federal prison litigation before statutory deadlines close.

SOURCES

- Bivens, We Hardly Knew Ye… – Update for November 20, 2026 — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)

BOP staffing, labor relations, and operational continuity

PATTERN

Three items this cycle bear on the labor and staffing environment inside BOP facilities: Federal News Network reporting that BOP is again seeking to terminate its master collective bargaining agreement with the Council of Prison Locals; a statement from the Connecticut congressional delegation opposing that effort; and OIG's identification of staffing as a recurring top management challenge. Labor-management disputes do not directly change rights for people in custody, but operational decisions affected by staffing — including lockdowns, programming schedules, visiting hours, and transfer timing — can be influenced by them.

WHAT FAMILIES AND DEFENDANTS CAN DO

Families planning visits should confirm visiting-day schedules by calling the facility within 48 hours of travel, since staffing-driven schedule changes are typically posted on short notice. People in custody should document any programming interruptions that affect FSA credit earning (dates, programs, reason given) and raise them with the Case Manager at the next team. Counsel tracking release dates should request updated SENTRY printouts when operational disruptions coincide with expected RRC or HC transitions.

SOURCES

- Bureau of Prisons again seeks to terminate union contract — Federal News Network
- Connecticut Congressional Delegation Blasts Federal Bureau of Prisons' Attempts to Dismantle Union Workers' Rights and Protections — Office of Congressman John Larson
- Federal Bureau Of Prisons On DOJ's List Of Top Challenges, Again — Forbes

Sentencing & Courts

Judicial Certainty Needed to Defeat § 2255 Prejudice – Update for November 13, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-11-13

A 28 U.S.C. § 2255 motion is the primary post-conviction vehicle for federal defendants to challenge a sentence after direct appeal. LISA summarizes appellate developments on the 'prejudice' prong, which requires the petitioner to show that the alleged error affected the sentence. Petitioners and counsel should ensure that the record supports a specific, concrete claim that the sentencing judge would have imposed a different sentence absent the error.

On Supervised Release, Nothing Succeeds Like Success – Update for November 17, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-11-17

Supervised release is the post-prison monitoring period imposed in nearly all federal sentences under 18 U.S.C. § 3583. The statute permits early termination after one year on request to the sentencing court under § 3583(e)(1) if the court finds early termination warranted by the conduct of the person on release and the interest of justice. The practical effect for people on release is that a documented record of compliance, employment, and community ties strengthens a termination motion.

Sentencing Commission Adds Expertise to Deliberations – Update for November 16, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-11-16

The U.S. Sentencing Commission is the independent federal agency that drafts the Sentencing Guidelines (USSG). Staffing additions in advance of the next amendment cycle may affect which policy priorities move

forward. Defendants and counsel with cases implicating anticipated amendments should track the Commission's published priorities at ussc.gov.

He Served 22 Years of a 60-Year Prison Sentence and Rebuilt His Life. Now the Supreme Court Says He Must Go Back.

Yahoo · 2026-11-24

Reporting on a Supreme Court ruling affecting a long-sentenced individual previously released and now facing return to custody. For readers in similar postures, the practical takeaway is that reversal of a release order typically triggers a surrender order with a short reporting window; counsel should move quickly to seek a stay, structured self-surrender, and consideration of any compassionate release or clemency pathway.

BOP Operations

Spotlight on the NIC Academy Division

Federal Bureau of Prisons · 2026-11-19

The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Academy Division is the BOP-administered training unit that provides correctional-leadership and specialized training to federal, state, and local corrections personnel. The announcement does not change operations at individual facilities but signals continued NIC programming; attorneys and researchers can access NIC training materials at nicic.gov.

Bureau of Prisons again seeks to terminate union contract

Federal News Network · 2026-11-25

BOP is again seeking to terminate the master collective bargaining agreement with the Council of Prison Locals, which represents federal corrections workers. The dispute is between BOP management and labor; its practical effect on people in custody depends on whether operational decisions shift in ways that affect programming, visitation, or staffing-driven lockdowns.

Serving Up Some BOP-Related Side Dishes – Update for November 24, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-11-24

LISA's roundup covers multiple BOP-adjacent developments this week, including personnel moves at the senior BOP level and continued policy churn. Readers tracking FSA implementation or specific facility operations should follow LISA and cross-check against primary sources at bop.gov and justice.gov.

Policy & Legislation

Federal Bureau Of Prisons On DOJ's List Of Top Challenges, Again

Forbes · 2026-11-20

The DOJ OIG issues an annual list of top management challenges facing DOJ components. BOP has appeared on the list in recent years, with persistent attention to staffing, infrastructure, medical care, and FSA implementation. The OIG report (available at oig.justice.gov) is a useful source for families and counsel seeking documented context for systemic issues raised in individual cases.

Annual Pardon Farce Scheduled – Update for November 23, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-11-23

LISA reports approximately 20,000 clemency petitions pending with the Office of the Pardon Attorney. See this issue's deep dive on year-end clemency for filing standards and parallel-track considerations including compassionate release.

Bivens, We Hardly Knew Ye… – Update for November 20, 2026

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-11-20

Appellate courts continue to narrow the availability of Bivens damages claims against individual federal officials. For most prison-conditions and medical-care claims, the FTCA (with Standard Form 95 presentment within two years) is now the primary damages pathway, and injunctive remedies may be pursued separately where applicable.

Conditions & Litigation

A federal women's prison became a 'rape club.' After officials shut it down, rampant abuse continued elsewhere

Dallas Observer · 2026-11-23

Reporting on the aftermath of the closure of FCI Dublin (a federal women's facility in California closed in 2024) describes continued allegations of staff-on-incarcerated-person abuse at facilities that received transferred populations. People in custody or family members with knowledge of abuse can report under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA, 34 U.S.C. § 30301 et seq.) through the facility hotline, to OIG at oig.justice.gov/hotline, or to counsel for consideration of FTCA presentment.

Michigan legislators challenge prison officials over inmate's medical care and mold claims

Michigan Advance · 2026-11-25

The reported matter involves Michigan state facilities, not BOP, but illustrates the role of legislative inquiries in surfacing medical and environmental complaints. For federal readers, the analogous route is contact with the member of Congress for the facility's district or the incarcerated person's home district; congressional casework offices routinely make inquiries to BOP on constituent matters.

PRACTICAL TIP

Post-Thanksgiving visitation and phone congestion

Thanksgiving fell on November 26 this year, and the days immediately after the holiday typically see elevated demand on visiting rooms and inmate telephone lines (TRULINCS calls and the Inmate Telephone System, ITS) at BOP facilities. Visiting room capacity is finite, and some facilities adjust visiting hours around the holiday for staffing reasons.

If you are planning a visit in the next 7–10 days, call the facility's main number within 48 hours of travel to confirm visiting hours and that your name is on the approved visiting list; the BOP visitor information page for each facility is at bop.gov under 'Locations.' If phone calls to your loved one are not connecting, ask them at the next successful call to confirm that your number is on their approved call list and that their monthly minutes have not been exhausted; the monthly limit under current BOP policy is set by Program Statement 5264.08 (Inmate Telephone Regulations). For video visiting where offered, verify that the approved-visitor status is current in the TRULINCS system.

Inside Out will return next cycle with continued coverage of FSA implementation, USSC amendment activity, and BOP operations. Readers who need further assistance navigating a specific federal-prison matter can reach 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 directly at help@drprison.org. Inside Out is a free service; no subscription required.

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