



Audit of the Federal Bureau of  
Prisons' Management and Oversight  
of its Chaplaincy Services Program

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**JULY 2021**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Audit of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Management and Oversight of its Chaplaincy Services Program

### Objective

The objective of this audit was to assess the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) management and oversight of its Chaplaincy Services Program to support faith-based activities and its effectiveness in preventing security risks and misuse of program resources.

### Results in Brief

The BOP, through its Chaplaincy Services Branch, seeks to ensure that inmates in its custody are afforded the opportunity to practice their religion of choice. At the institution level, BOP chaplains are primarily responsible for the implementation of the BOP's religious services programs, which includes, among other things, the facilitation of religious worship and the provision of religious spaces and other items needed for religious observances.

We found that a significant shortage in the number of chaplains and other chaplaincy services staff impairs the BOP's ability to implement a safe and effective religious services program. In addition, we found that a lack of faith diversity among the BOP's chaplaincy staff leaves some inmate faith groups significantly underrepresented. As a result, many institutions rely on alternative religious services options, such as inmate-led services. However, we found that the BOP often undertook these alternative options without ensuring adequate supervision and oversight of them. For example, we found that some institutions permitted inmates with a known nexus to international or domestic terrorism to lead religious services. Finally, we found that the BOP has not considered a strategy to leverage existing technologies that could allow for certain religious services to be shared virtually across institutions.

### Recommendations

We make five recommendations to the BOP to improve the delivery of religious services to the inmate population and to help diversify and alleviate shortages in its chaplain staff.

### Audit Results

During the BOP's intake processing, inmates are asked to state their religious affiliation, if applicable. Inmates indicating a preference are designated as a member of one of the faith groups identified in the BOP's SENTRY system. As of March 2020, approximately 70 percent of the BOP's inmate population officially identified with a faith group.

We found that the BOP lacks adequate chaplaincy resources to meet this demand for religious services. Specifically, we determined that, in order to meet the BOP staffing guidelines, as of March 2020, the BOP's chaplaincy should have consisted of 357 chaplains and 122 religious services assistants; instead, we found that the BOP employed only 236 chaplains and 64 assistants, approximately 30 percent below the BOP's guidelines. We further found that, although the BOP's required minimum staffing level is one chaplain and one assistant per institution, as of March 2020, three of the BOP's institutions had no chaplain at all and nearly half of BOP's institutions had no religious services assistant.

Further, the lack of diversity among the faith groups of chaplaincy staff leaves the BOP with few low risk options for providing services, especially to smaller population faith groups. As of March 2020, 199 of the BOP's 236 chaplains (84 percent) represented a Protestant Christian faith (including Adventist) even though inmates identifying with the Protestant Christian faith make up about 34 percent of inmates claiming a faith preference. Further, the remaining 37 chaplains represent only 7 additional faith groups, leaving at least 16 groups without any chaplains, and two groups that comprise the second and third largest faith groups – Catholics and Muslims – significantly underrepresented among the BOP

chaplains. We concluded that the BOP has not taken adequate steps to address its long-standing chaplaincy staffing issues, including issues arising from the increasing religious diversity within the inmate population.

### **Chaplaincy Shortages and Diversity Challenges Present Risks**

In the absence of a fully-staffed and diverse chaplaincy, the BOP's institutions are unable to adequately staff their religious services programs, prompting many institutions to turn to alternatives such as inmate-led services and heavy reliance on contract faith providers and minimally vetted volunteer faith providers to fill the gaps in the chaplaincy staff. These staffing shortages and alternatives present risks.

#### ***Inmate-led Services***

BOP staff members consistently told us that inmate-led services presented safety and security risks. One particular concern was the potential for an inmate to use a religious leadership role to engage in prohibited activities or as a method to obtain power and influence among the inmate population. Additionally, we found that the BOP's policies do not restrict certain inmates from leading services and appear to be inconsistent regarding the level of required monitoring. We determined that inmates incarcerated for terrorism-related crimes, or with known connections to terrorist organizations, were permitted to lead religious services at 4 of the 12 BOP facilities we visited.

#### ***Monitoring of Chaplaincy Services Spaces***

Depending upon the resources available at an institution, a single chaplain may be responsible for simultaneously monitoring multiple chapels, classrooms, hallways, restrooms, offices, and storage areas for improper inmate activities. To assist chaplaincy staff, these spaces are typically equipped with audio and visual monitoring equipment. However, two institutions we visited did not have monitoring equipment in spaces where religious services were conducted.

#### ***Oversight of Chapel Libraries***

Collectively, the BOP's chapel libraries contain nearly 800,000 individual items including religious texts, books with religious themes, and audio and video recordings. While these libraries help to facilitate the free exercise of religion by inmates, we found that BOP staff does not maintain adequate control over the materials permitted

into them due to a poorly maintained library database and the inability to adequately screen foreign language materials. This creates a risk that libraries may contain media that is inappropriate for a correctional institution, including items we found during our audit that advocated violence and extremism.

#### ***Inmate Contact with Volunteer Faith Providers***

With limited exceptions, BOP policy prohibits external volunteer service providers, including those for religious services, from contacting inmates outside of the prison setting to reduce opportunities for inappropriate relationships to develop. However, our testing found instances of apparent inappropriate contact via telephone and email by volunteer faith providers with inmates, as well as weaknesses in the BOP's system for tracking terminated and previously disciplined volunteer faith providers.

### **Strategies to Improve Chaplaincy Shortages, Faith Diversity Imbalance, and Recruiting Methods**

We identified several improvements that the BOP can make to its chaplaincy hiring efforts and to its existing programs that can alleviate some of the BOP's staffing and diversity issues. First, we were told that several factors have impacted the BOP's efforts to recruit a more representative chaplaincy. Two of the most significant factors appear to be the BOP's formal educational requirements and age restrictions that must be satisfied in order to qualify for a Chaplain position. Additionally, we learned that the BOP's recruitment and hiring process for chaplains is complex and hindered by time constraints.

The BOP has implemented alternative methods to address chaplaincy shortages and the lack of diversity, such as the use of contract and volunteer faith providers. However, the rates of participating faith contractors and volunteers have declined in recent years, shifting much of the burden of seeking more resources to field chaplains. We believe the BOP would benefit from a centralized effort to develop working relationships with national faith organizations that can encourage their members to work with the BOP's institutions in their community.

Finally, we found that the BOP already has the technological capability to implement alternatives to inmate-led services, such as live streaming chaplain-led services to multiple institutions. We also noted that, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual services can allow inmates to receive services they may not otherwise have been able to access.

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# Introduction

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), through its Chaplaincy Services Branch, seeks to ensure the Constitutional religious rights of inmates. The BOP's chaplains, contracted faith providers, and trained community faith volunteers facilitate religious worship and scriptural studies across faith lines, and provide pastoral care, spiritual guidance, and counseling. Inmates are permitted to participate in religious observances, wear religious items, observe religious holidays, and access religious materials. As of March 2020, approximately 70 percent of the BOP's inmate population self-identified as having a religious preference among more than 24 different faith traditions or groups.<sup>1</sup>

The BOP's Central Office Chaplaincy Services Branch (CSB) manages and provides oversight of the BOP's religious services programs at a national level.<sup>2</sup> Its primary mission is to accommodate the free exercise of religion for inmates by providing pastoral care and facilitating the opportunity for inmates to pursue their individual religious beliefs and practices in accordance with the law, federal regulations, and BOP policy. The CSB seeks to accomplish these goals through the development of religious services-related policy, effective chaplaincy recruitment, multi-faith training of its chaplains, and connecting with outside faith-based organizations. The CSB also maintains the Chapel Library Database (CLD). Further, the BOP's religious services program also includes the operation of the Life Connections and Threshold programs.<sup>3</sup>

At the institution level, Chaplaincy Services Departments facilitate faith-based services for their inmates by providing a range of programming, religious media, access to ceremonial items, time and space for weekly services and study groups, and crisis counseling. The BOP's staffing and supplemental guidelines specify that the chaplaincy services department at each facility should have a minimum of one chaplain and one religious services assistant, with supplemental chaplaincy staff for specialized facilities such as those with a major medical center. However, as we describe throughout this report, many of the BOP institutions do not meet these minimum staffing requirements.

## BOP Chaplaincy Staff

Dispersed among the BOP's 122 institutions, chaplains serve as the frontline of the BOP's efforts to provide services to a large and religiously diverse inmate population. To accommodate the needs of this diverse population, BOP chaplains must minister within a pluralistic community and be impartial and inclusive.

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<sup>1</sup> While these inmates self-identified as having a religious preference, not all actively participate in religious services or access the BOP's chaplaincy services resources.

<sup>2</sup> The CSB has a staff of nine employees, including the Chief of Chaplaincy Services, an Administrative Officer, an Assistant Chaplaincy Administrator, two Administrative Program Managers, a Faith Based Program Coordinator, and three Chaplaincy Services Coordinators (CSCs). CSCs aid institutions with chaplain hiring and provide pastoral care, advocacy, and technical assistance to chaplains in the field. Each CSC is assigned two regional territories.

<sup>3</sup> The BOP's Life Connections Program is an 18-month faith-based residential program open to inmates of all religious traditions, including those who do not claim a religious preference. Established in 2002 in response to the White House Faith-Based Initiative, the program was designed to assist inmate participants in developing one's faith, moral and social responsibility, and applying these beliefs into practical life skills in order successfully transition back to their respective communities and families. As of March 2020, the program is currently operating at five locations. The Threshold Program has similar faith-based programming and is taught by chaplains and community volunteers at 110 institutions for a 6 to 9 month time period. We did not audit these programs as part of this review.

While BOP chaplains lead services and ceremonies within their own faith tradition, they also provide pastoral care to all inmates in the form of counseling or crisis management, facilitate religious services for other faith groups through contract and volunteer faith providers and, in many cases, inmates themselves.

As of March 2020, the BOP reported 236 chaplains on staff, some of whom are supported by 64 religious services assistants (RSAs). However, these 236 chaplains only represent 8 unique faith groups, with the overwhelming majority (84 percent) being of a Protestant Christian faith. Table 1 below lists the 26 specific designations that the BOP currently uses to identify inmates' faith in its SENTRY system, and the number of the BOP's chaplains affiliated with each of the faiths.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> SENTRY is the BOP's primary information system and is used to collect and store information relating to the care, classification, subsistence, protection, discipline, and programs of its inmates. SENTRY currently includes 26 designations for inmate faith classification as shown in Table 1. Notably, in practice, the BOP considers Atheists to be a faith group and it considers the Adventist faith to be part of the broader Protestant Christian faith group. The system also includes an "other" category which captures faith groups not specifically listed in SENTRY. Some faith group categories include associated subgroups. For example, the Pagan faith group includes inmates who identify as Asatru or Wiccan. Further, SENTRY contains another designation of "no preference." Because these inmates chose not to identify with a particular faith group, we have not included them in Table 1.

Table 1

BOP Recognized Faith Groups and Chaplaincy Faith Representation  
As of March 2020

Faith Group	Chaplains	Faith Group	Chaplains
<b>Adventist</b>	<b>0*</b>	Moorish Science Temple	0
<b>Atheist</b>	<b>0**</b>	Mormon	0
American Indian	0	<b>Muslim</b>	<b>13</b>
Baha'i	0	Nation of Islam	0
<b>Buddhist</b>	<b>2</b>	Non-Trinitarian	0
<b>Catholic</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>2</b>
Christian Scientist	0	Pagan	0
Church of Christ	0	Pentecostal	0
Hindu	0	<b>Protestant Christian</b>	<b>199</b>
Humanist	0	Rastafarian	0
Jehovah's Witness	0	Santeria	0
<b>Jewish</b>	<b>4</b>	Sikh	0
<b>Messianic</b>	<b>1</b>	Other Faith Groups	0

Note: Faith groups recorded in bold text are those represented by chaplains of the same or closely associated faith group.

\* We list the Adventist faith group separately in Table 1 to reflect how that faith is captured in the BOP's SENTRY system. According to the BOP, it considers the Adventist faith to be a sub-group of the Protestant Christian faith, which is represented by its Protestant Christian chaplains.

\*\* The SENTRY system includes a faith group designation for inmates who identify themselves as "atheist". According to the BOP, it considers atheist inmates to be represented by its chaplaincy because, as trained religious experts, the BOP's chaplains of any faith could provide counsel to atheist inmates if needed.

Source: BOP

## Contract and Volunteer Faith Providers

Because the BOP's chaplaincy composition does not include representation for all faith groups, it must rely on external faith providers (contract and volunteer faith providers) to supplement chaplaincy staff, when possible. Ordinarily, the BOP's contract and volunteer faith providers must be ordained or hold a recognized religious and ministerial position in their faith tradition in order to conduct worship services, but they are not required to have the same level of education or training as BOP chaplains. Contract and volunteer faith providers are permitted to perform ministry when staff chaplains are unavailable and are also permitted to assist in weekly services or rites for inmates of their faith.<sup>5</sup> All contract and volunteer faith

<sup>5</sup> There are two types of volunteers within the BOP, and both assist BOP chaplaincy with providing religious services to inmates. Level 1 volunteers are authorized to assist the BOP 4 days or less per year. Level 2 volunteers assist the BOP more than 4 days a year. Both Level 1 and Level 2 volunteers must complete the required volunteer training prior to interacting with inmates or shortly after acceptance of their application.

providers must receive and provide the BOP with an endorsement from their religious organization and are also subject to a “moderate” background investigation or a National Crime Information Center (NCIC) criminal check. All contractors and certain volunteers at the BOP may also be subject to an interview prior to inmate contact.<sup>6</sup>

As of September 2019, the BOP reported the use of 117 contract and 3,698 volunteer faith providers collectively representing 22 different faith groups to provide some form of religious services programming to its inmates throughout its facilities. While the need for external religious services providers is great, the current number of contract and volunteer faith providers working with the BOP has decreased by approximately 28 percent since 2015.

## OIG Audit Approach

The objective of our audit was to assess the BOP’s management and oversight of its religious services program to support faith-based activities and its effectiveness in preventing security risks and misuse of program resources. The scope of our audit generally covers activities from October 2013 through March 2020 in the chaplaincy services departments of the BOP’s 122 BOP institutions, which includes BOP chaplains, contract faith providers, and faith-based volunteers. We also observed and reviewed the BOP’s oversight of chapel spaces, such as libraries, storage rooms, and classrooms used for religious education.

To accomplish the audit objective, we conducted interviews with over 70 BOP representatives, including officials from the CSB, a BOP regional office located in Atlanta, Georgia, and 12 individual BOP facilities of varying security levels.<sup>7</sup> While at these facilities we observed religious services and other religious programming for multiple faith groups, as well as chaplaincy spaces, such as libraries and assigned faith group lockers. We also reviewed a sample of volunteer faith provider files to determine if BOP policies and procedures were followed. Lastly, we utilized evidence related to BOP’s religious services program gathered during the OIG’s recent Audit of the BOP’s Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization.<sup>8</sup>

## Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Audit

We visited the 12 BOP facilities listed in Appendix 2 prior to February 2020. We learned that the BOP’s ability to provide religious services has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the BOP issued guidelines regarding the management of its facilities, including chaplaincy services programs. The implementation of these guidelines as they related to chaplaincy services and religious programs generally varied by institution and required all chaplains to make daily visits to accommodate the spiritual needs of inmates in confinement. Contract faith providers were permitted to continue serving facilities, subject to the health screening and other protocols of the location, although many institutions

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<sup>6</sup> NCIC is an electronic clearinghouse of criminal records managed through a shared management concept between the FBI and federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement users. As explained in greater detail below, volunteers are designated as “Level 1” or “Level 2.” Only volunteer candidates designated as Level 2 are subject to an interview.

<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix 2 for a listing of facilities visited in support of this audit.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Audit of the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization, Audit Report 20-042 (March 2020), <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/a20042.pdf>.

chose to limit the use of these contractors. The services of volunteer faith providers were suspended across the BOP at that time.

In September 2020, the BOP began to allow modified programming in the chapel spaces. Some of the modifications included rotating inmate faith groups to the chapel and conducting services with inmates from different housing units, using social distancing and safety practices, as well as the development of institutional plans to safely celebrate religious holidays. In November 2020, the BOP resumed the use of religious volunteers to meet the religious needs of inmates during holiday observances.

This audit does not address the effectiveness of the pandemic-related changes made to the BOP's chaplaincy services operations. However, the OIG has implemented a robust program related to oversight of the BOP's operations after the onset of the pandemic, including a series of remote inspections. For more information on the effect of the pandemic on the BOP operations and the OIG's oversight of those efforts, please see the OIG's pandemic resource page at <https://oig.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

## Audit Results

The BOP lacks adequate chaplaincy resources and religious diversity among its Chaplaincy staff to meet the demand for the provision of religious services at its institutions. As a result, the BOP frequently relies on alternative religious services options, such as inmate-led services, contract faith providers, or minimally screened volunteers. We found that such alternatives carry varying levels of risk, and these risks are exacerbated by the fact that responsibility for monitoring alternative religious services options falls to understaffed and overburdened institution-level Chaplaincy Services departments.

We determined that during the period covered by our audit the BOP's chaplaincy was not staffed according to the BOP's guidelines at many institutions. As of March 2020, the BOP's chaplaincy staff across all institutions was comprised of 236 chaplains, which is approximately 30 percent below what the BOP's guidelines consider to be a fully staffed chaplaincy for the inmate population. Further, the lack of faith diversity among current chaplaincy staff leaves the BOP with few low risk options for providing services, especially to the smaller population faith groups. As a result, the BOP has increased its reliance on the alternative religious services options described above. However, we found that the BOP often did so without ensuring adequate supervision and oversight of these alternative options. For example, in some institutions we found that BOP staff did not have monitoring equipment in areas where services are conducted. The lack of monitoring equipment creates a risk because chaplains and other staff who are primarily charged with real-time oversight of inmate programming cannot simultaneously monitor multiple services. We also found that some institutions permitted inmates with a known nexus to international or domestic terrorism (terrorist inmates) to lead religious services.<sup>9</sup> Along with their required real-time monitoring responsibilities, chaplains are also responsible for managing chapel spaces. However, in at least two of the institutions we visited we found that spaces assigned to faith groups were not adequately controlled.

Overall, we concluded that the BOP has not taken adequate steps to address its long-standing chaplaincy staffing issues, including the issues arising from increasing religious diversity within the inmate population. For example, the BOP relies on strict educational guidelines for chaplains that may disqualify otherwise qualified candidates. Further, wardens with limited budgets sometimes prioritize hiring lower-graded correctional staff over the higher-graded chaplains to maximize staffing levels at their institutions. We also found that the BOP has not considered a strategy to improve existing programs or leverage existing technologies that could allow for certain religious services to be shared virtually across institutions. As we describe throughout this report, we believe that the BOP should develop and implement strategies that better address these critical problems in an innovative and flexible way that can achieve the delicate

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<sup>9</sup> We refer in this report to "terrorist inmates" as inmates that the BOP's Counterterrorism Unit (CTU) designated as a terrorist inmate.

The BOP's terrorism definition follows 22 U.S.C. § 2656f(d)(2), which defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents." In designating an inmate as a terrorist inmate, which leads to enhanced monitoring, the CTU relies on information provided by investigators, prosecutors, and the courts, as well as its own background research. Inmates designated by CTU as terrorist inmates are not necessarily just those inmates convicted on terrorism charges. For example, if an inmate is convicted on charges not directly related to terrorism, but a nexus to terrorism has otherwise been identified through CTU's research the inmate may be designated as a terrorist inmate.

balance between institutional security and maximizing inmate access to faith-based services, thereby respecting their right to exercise their religion.

## Risks Resulting from Chaplaincy Shortages and Diversity Challenges

According to the BOP's Central Office Chaplaincy Services Branch (CSB), the BOP's Chaplaincy Services departments have faced severe staffing shortages - primarily among the BOP chaplains. In addition, there has been a persistent imbalance between the religious affiliations of the BOP's chaplains and the diverse faith preferences among inmates. In the absence of a fully staffed and diverse chaplaincy, BOP institutions are unable to adequately administer their religious programs, prompting many BOP institutions to turn to alternatives that pose enhanced risks, such as inmate-led services and reliance on minimally vetted volunteers. We believe the BOP must improve its efforts to bolster and diversify its chaplaincy.

### Inmate-Led Services

When the BOP does not have adequate religious service coverage through the use of chaplains, contract faith providers, or volunteers, it may allow inmates to lead religious services. While inmate-led services are permissible under BOP policy, we found that the BOP's policies do not speak to possible restrictions on certain inmates leading services and also appear somewhat inconsistent concerning the level of BOP monitoring required. Specifically, the BOP's Technical Reference Manual (TRM) for chaplaincy states that inmates may not preside or lead inmate worship except in instances when other resources (chaplains, contract faith providers, or volunteers) are not available, and only under chaplaincy supervision. Further, the TRM explains that the required supervision entails frequent visual surveillance and intermittent in-room supervision. In contrast, the BOP Program Statement 5360.09 "Religious Beliefs and Practices" includes no specific prohibition of inmate led services but states that "inmate-led religious programs require constant staff supervision." We believe these policies have created confusion and uncertainty among chaplaincy staff on the eligibility of certain inmates to lead religious services and the proper level of monitoring when this option is used.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding inmate-led service policy, we found consistent agreement among the CSB officials, Special Investigative Services (SIS) staff, and chaplains we interviewed that inmate-led services presented safety and security risks to BOP institutions. One concern raised by BOP staff was the potential for an inmate to use a religious leadership role as a method to obtain power and influence among the inmate population. However, we also found that some BOP staff use formal religious titles when referring to inmates who lead services, thereby reinforcing and elevating the inmate's status. We agree that allowing inmates to lead services and referring to inmates as religious leaders presents a risk that inmate religious leaders could misuse services to encourage violent behavior, radicalize other inmates, or engage in otherwise prohibited activity.<sup>10</sup>

Given the agreement about the risks posed by inmate-led services, we asked the CSB Administrator why there is not a clear policy that would prohibit certain inmates, especially those considered high-risk, from leading religious services. The CSB Administrator agreed that certain inmates should not lead religious services, but added that it is difficult to change BOP policy on this point because of the Religious Freedom

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<sup>10</sup> The BOP defines radicalization as the process by which individuals come to believe that their engagement in, or facilitation of, non-state violence to achieve social and political change is necessary and justified.

Restoration Act (RFRA).<sup>11</sup> The CSB Administrator added that in the absence of specific policy, chaplains should rely on training, guidance memos, and support from the BOP's Chaplaincy Services Coordinators (CSCs) when determining whether certain inmates at their institutions should be permitted to lead religious services.

Many CSB officials agreed with the Branch Administrator and told us that high-risk inmates, including terrorist inmates, should not be allowed to lead religious services; however, in the absence of a clear BOP policy, they recognized it is difficult for chaplains to enforce. In fact, despite the consistent belief that high-risk inmates should not lead services among CSB staff, we found only one instance where a chaplain reportedly took preemptive action to prevent a known terrorist from leading religious services. Chaplains may have a multitude of individual reasons why they might hesitate to proactively prevent a particular inmate from leading services. However, regardless of those individual reasons, we believe hesitancy is understandable because chaplains do not have the weight of clear BOP policy to support such sensitive decision-making.

In addition to not stating clearly whether chaplains may exclude certain inmates from leading religious services, we also found that the BOP policy is silent on acceptable processes for the selection of inmates to lead services. Many chaplains currently allow faith groups to select their own leaders. When we inquired about the rationale for this selection process, some chaplains explained that they allowed inmates to select their own leaders to avoid complaints, lawsuits, or the rejection of leaders that would otherwise be selected by BOP staff. While these are legitimate concerns, the absence of a clear selection process in BOP policy results in the potential for the selection of inmates designated as high-risk by the BOP, including terrorist inmates, to lead religious services.

At the 12 facilities we visited we sought to determine whether any inmates identified as terrorist inmates by the BOP were permitted to lead religious services. Overall, we found that terrorist inmates were permitted to lead or regularly led religious services at 4 of these 12 facilities. For example, at one facility, terrorist inmates led religious services even though the BOP hired a contract faith provider, as we discuss in greater detail below. At another one of these facilities we found that an al-Qaeda affiliated inmate, who was convicted on terrorism charges, was permitted to lead services on a frequent basis. The facility's chaplain explained that the inmate was selected to lead services by the other inmate faith group members due to his extensive faith knowledge and Arabic fluency. At two other facilities we learned that inmates with ties to two prominent terrorist groups, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Shabaab were permitted to lead services, with at least one doing so on a regular basis at this facility.

In addition, we identified two instances in two different institutions, where inmates disagreed with the ideology of a contract faith provider secured by the BOP.<sup>12</sup> At one of these institutions, we identified two convicted terrorists who were currently leading religious services for their faith group in place of the contract faith provider. At the other institution, institution staff believed allowing the contract faith provider

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<sup>11</sup> Religious Freedom Restoration Act, 42 USC § 2000-bb (1993).

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the four locations visited during this audit that allowed terrorist inmate-led services, we also observed a terrorist inmate leading services at one of the locations we visited during our *Audit of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization*, Audit Report 20-042 (March 2020), <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/a20042.pdf>.

to conduct services for the objecting inmates would jeopardize the provider's safety. As a result, the contract faith provider stopped conducting services to the inmate faith group, allowing the inmates to lead their own services.

In the absence of adequately staffed chaplaincy services departments and a clear policy further limiting or prohibiting the practice, many chaplains have consistently and regularly permitted high-risk inmate-led religious services. Although we recognize the challenges and sensitivities in developing such policies, we recommend that the BOP strengthen existing policy to include clear guidance about when inmates may be permitted to lead religious services, which inmates should be prohibited from leading services, and minimum monitoring requirements for religious programs or services led by inmates.

### **Monitoring of Chaplaincy Services Spaces and Activities**

Chaplaincy services spaces include chapels, chapel libraries, and inmate lockers as well as other controlled areas used for faith-based programming. Generally, inmates can enter or exit these spaces during controlled movement periods within scheduled inmate programming hours.<sup>13</sup> BOP policy requires chaplains or other BOP staff to frequently monitor the chaplaincy services space for inmate misconduct, including circulating contraband, fighting, advocating extremism or violence, or other BOP inmate policy violations. Depending upon the resources available at an institution, including its chaplaincy services staffing levels, a single chaplain may be solely responsible for simultaneously monitoring multiple chapels, classrooms, hallways, restrooms, offices, and storage areas for improper inmate activities. To better assist chaplaincy staff with monitoring, these spaces are typically equipped with audio and visual monitoring equipment. However, we found that two institutions we visited did not have any monitoring equipment in spaces where religious services were conducted.

At one facility, we observed the chaplain monitoring services that were being led by a detainee charged with terrorism-related crimes by leaving his office door ajar to hear the service in the adjacent chapel. During our observation of the service, we had difficulty hearing and distinguishing individual words. Further, because the chaplain's office did not have a direct, unobstructed line of sight into the chapel, we could not see what activities were occurring inside the chapel. We also found that some religious services were permitted to be conducted in housing unit spaces that were not outfitted with audio or visual monitoring equipment and were monitored by correctional officers rather than chaplains. At another facility, we learned that the chaplain conducted services in the housing units on a rotational basis.<sup>14</sup> On the weeks that the chaplain was not present, inmates were able to lead services. Similarly, the chapel areas in the housing units at this location did not have audio or visual monitoring equipment and were visually monitored by correctional officers.

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<sup>13</sup> With the exception of federal prison camps, inmate movement throughout the BOP's institutions are regulated by controlled movement. The purpose of controlled movement is to ensure that the movement of inmates is orderly. During a controlled move, inmates are allowed a specific amount of time (e.g., 10 minutes) to move from one point to another within the institution without a pass or staff escort.

<sup>14</sup> We observed this instance during our *Audit of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization*, Audit Report 20-042 (March 2020), <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/a20042.pdf>.

We find the lack of monitoring equipment at these institutions concerning because these two institutions frequently house detainees being held on terrorism-related charges. Further, when monitoring duties are performed by non-chaplaincy staff, they likely do not possess the same level of religious training as chaplaincy staff. Therefore, they may not be able to recognize questionable language or behaviors among inmates during these services, or, alternatively, inadequately trained staff may identify certain language or behaviors as questionable when they are not and attempt to restrict them. Additionally, many housing units are staffed by only one correctional officer who must often monitor hundreds of inmates in the unit, facilitate inmate movements to other areas, and perform various necessary administrative duties. We recommend that the BOP determine the institutions without remote audio and video monitoring equipment in spaces where religious services are conducted and determine the feasibility of installing such equipment, or if the BOP is unable to install monitoring equipment at these facilities, it should take steps to ensure adequate monitoring is performed.

We observed real-time religious services at six of the institutions that we visited to determine the quality of the BOP's video monitoring systems within its Chaplaincy Services departments. Based on our observations, we found that the video monitoring equipment was inadequate at five out of the six institutions we visited. Specifically, the quality of some of the visual feeds was poor and we had difficulty clearly distinguishing personal characteristics and facial features among inmates. We also found that the placement of some cameras created blind spots because the camera placement was stationary and could not be adjusted by the chaplains. One chaplain pointed out that inmates had identified these "blind spots" and have used them to engage in prohibited behavior. For example, the chaplain noted that he caught multiple inmates smoking when he saw smoke rising from a blind spot while monitoring the camera feed.

To supplement visual monitoring, the BOP has installed microphones in most chapel spaces that allow them to switch between audio transmissions from different locations. However, staff at some of the locations we visited indicated that it is difficult to hear inmates when they talk in low voices or when they turn up the volume of the television or radio. Further, the audio monitoring equipment is separate from the video monitoring equipment, and in some locations was not installed in a readily accessible or convenient area for the chaplains. At one institution, a chaplain had to cross the room or reach well above head level, turning their attention away from ongoing activities, just to switch to another audio feed. Also, several of the institutions' SIS departments did not have access to the chapel and chapel classroom audio transmissions. Instead, the SIS staff had to rely on chaplains to report and refer any concerns or policy violations that occurred in the chaplaincy services department.

According to the CSB Administrator, to preserve the sacredness of the chapel space, audio and visual feeds from chaplaincy services spaces should not be recorded. Therefore, chaplains or others utilizing this monitoring equipment can only do so in real-time, creating a significant risk that prohibited behavior could be frequently missed. Given the fact that religious services are already subject to real-time video monitoring, we do not believe recording services from the video transmission would be any more of an intrusion on the service. In view of its legitimate institutional security interests, we recommend that the BOP reexamine its practice of prohibiting recording audio and video feeds from chaplaincy services spaces alongside relevant federal law and regulations to help ensure that religious services are monitored to the greatest extent possible and are not misused by some inmates to engage in prohibited conduct.

## Oversight of Faith Group Lockers

Faith groups at some institutions are provided with an individual, dedicated space within the Chapel spaces to store various items necessary for the practice, ceremonies, and religious rituals and rites associated with each faith. The BOP considers these individual storage spaces, commonly referred to as “faith group lockers” and the contents within them to be BOP property. Property obtained or owned by inmates is not permitted to be stored in these lockers. Chaplains are required to maintain access to the lockers which are generally located in the chapel or classrooms. Further, chaplains are required by policy to conduct frequent searches of storage areas, including faith group lockers, to ensure that contraband is not introduced.

To ascertain the effectiveness of the BOP’s controls over faith group lockers, we inspected the faith group lockers in 10 of the 12 institutions we visited.<sup>15</sup> While most of the lockers we reviewed contained only permissible items, such as altar cloths, small statues, candles, and sacred texts specific to that faith, a total of four lockers among three different institutions contained prohibited or questionable items. In these instances, the materials we found were either prohibited in chapel libraries, advocated violence and extremist beliefs, or property personally owned by inmates. For example, at one facility we found a faith group locker that contained documents and images advocating white supremacy. At the same institution another faith group locker contained copies of emails sent to individual inmates and a photo album of inmates in that faith group as well as several copies of a previously prohibited book marked as chapel property with a checkout list. At another facility, we found that one faith group locker contained a SENTRY roster of inmates identifying as part of the faith group along with a handout containing hate speech. When we presented the results of this review to CSB, those officials agreed that these items were inappropriate and in violation of BOP policy. As it relates to the multiple copies of the prohibited book, CSB officials believed it was likely due to miscommunication or misunderstanding on the guidance related to it.

While BOP policy provides inmates with access to items needed for their religious practice that may be stored in faith group lockers, it also requires that chaplains conduct searches of faith group lockers and to remain in control of the lockers. At some locations we visited, we found that chaplains unlocked faith group lockers at the start of services and then locked them after services were complete, without consistently conducting a locker search before and after the service. By allowing inmates unsupervised access to the lockers during their allotted worship time, chaplains at these locations temporarily relinquished control of the faith group lockers but did not consistently search the lockers after the service to ensure that no prohibited items were introduced.

We believe that the BOP should better ensure that chaplains and Chaplaincy Services staff monitor faith group lockers as required and have a complete understanding of prohibited items such as restricted texts and inmate personal property. Without proper monitoring implemented, faith group lockers can be used as a method for inmates to share or distribute radical, violent, and other prohibited materials. We recommend that the BOP ensure that established security procedures regarding faith group lockers are followed and that the BOP policy includes clear procedures for inmate access.

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<sup>15</sup> Administrative Maximum Facility Florence does not provide faith group lockers as all services are conducted in inmate cells. We did not review the contents of faith group lockers at Federal Detention Center Miami.

## Chapel Libraries, Foreign Language Materials and Chapel Library Database

Collectively, the BOP's chapel libraries contain nearly 800,000 individual items including religious texts, books with religious themes, and audio and video recordings. The contents of each library vary by location, with many of the resources donated by religious organizations. While these libraries help to facilitate the free exercise of religion by inmates, without appropriate oversight prohibited material could find its way to the chapel library shelves.

In a 2004 report, the OIG found that several BOP institutions did not have inventories of the books available to the inmates. In response to that report, the BOP stated it would complete an inventory of print and audio-video materials in its libraries and review them for content that promotes violence, domestic or foreign terrorism, or any discrimination based upon race, color, religion, gender or national origin. As a result of this effort, CSB's Chapel Library Database (CLD) was established. The CLD is currently managed by the CSB, and available to all chaplaincy staff. It is housed on the BOP's intranet and is required to contain a record of all publications and other religious media materials that have been obtained for chaplaincy services' use. Each institution-level chaplaincy services department is required to maintain an accurate and up to date account of the library materials they possess. These records are searchable by CSB officials and other chapel staff members. A potential benefit of this system is that chaplains can search CLD records for book titles that have already been reviewed and accepted thus reducing the time required to review new materials. However, we found that the CLD was inefficient due to the lack of consistency in its use and the CSB's ineffective control and maintenance of the database.

To prevent the introduction of prohibited materials, chaplains are required by policy to review all new chapel library acquisitions prior to allowing the materials to be circulated among the inmate population. To signify that the materials have been reviewed, new library materials should be entered into the CLD with one of four status designations: accept, review, pending review, or reject.<sup>16</sup> Nearly all library items (780,732 or 98 percent) in the CLD are designated as accepted for circulation. Further, according to CSB officials and CLD records, the BOP has never formally rejected any religious materials from inclusion in its chapel libraries. CSB officials stated that library materials are not rejected because doing so might be considered a violation of the constitutionally protected rights of inmates. However, as of March 2020, there were 12,593 library items designated as "review" and 200 are designated as "pending review." The BOP could not provide data regarding the length of time materials have been in a "pending review" status because the CLD is not capable of tracking this information. Without timely action or a function to monitor an item's status, these designations effectively serve as rejections.

We also found that religious materials were inconsistently recorded in the CLD among the 12 institutions we visited. For example, one book that had been removed from circulation within the chapel libraries at the institutions we visited was marked as "review" in the CLD at two institutions, accepted at another, and not

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<sup>16</sup> According to the CSB, the four status designations are defined as: (1) "Accept" means the item has been reviewed and is available for inmate use; (2) "Review" means an item has been removed or prevented from entering circulation and is stored away from inmate access due to BOP staff concerns; (3) "Pending Review" means an item has been sent to the CSB for further review; and (4) "Reject" means an item is not available for circulation and has been removed from chapel libraries. For items marked as rejected, the CSB in consultation with the BOP's legal and intelligence departments assign this designation to materials that contain specific documented institution security threat and terrorist links.

included in the CLD for the remaining nine. We saw more than twelve other books also inconsistently recorded in the CLD. To determine the accuracy of the CLD inventories, we judgmentally sampled a total of 110 books from the chapel libraries at 11 of the institutions we visited and checked them against their CLDs for each BOP institution. We found that collectively 47 of the 110 books we sampled (43 percent) were not recorded in the CLDs. Further, we found that at least one sampled item from each chapel library that was not recorded in the respective CLD at each of the tested facilities.

Because of this inconsistent use, we concluded that the CLD has not been an effective tool for chaplains and other Chaplaincy Services staff. We believe that because of the many inaccuracies we found in the CLD, neither chaplains nor the CSB have adequate knowledge of the contents of the materials in the BOP's chapel libraries. When we asked CSB staff why the database does not accurately reflect the contents of the BOP's chapel libraries we were told that the chaplains have multiple responsibilities that consume their work hours and can make mistakes. We heard similar concerns from chaplains regarding the demands on their time and the impact that it has on their CLD responsibilities. One chaplain told us that he reviews library materials at home and does not record it as hours worked. Other chaplains told us it is difficult to maintain the CLD due to the lack of staffing resources that they need to realistically keep the database up to date with additions and deletions. We believe that this is another example of the multiple duties assigned to chaplains that cannot be reasonably completed as required.

The CLD should be a tool that prevents duplication of effort among the BOP's chaplaincy services staff. If working as intended, a chaplain should be able to determine if a book has already been reviewed and accepted at another institution. If a book is accepted by one chaplain, the chaplains at other institutions should not have to spend time reviewing the same book. Yet, because of the inconsistencies and inaccuracies, the CLD cannot reliably serve this purpose.

Recognizing that many inmates are not native English speakers, chaplaincy services departments often purchase library materials in other languages, including Arabic, French, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, and other languages. Library materials in non-English languages must also be reviewed before entering library circulation. This presents significant challenges for chaplaincy services departments because chaplains do not have easy access to translation services to review the foreign language materials.

Further, in some cases, according to an CSB official, chaplains cannot enter foreign language publications and other library items into CLD without an English translation. Therefore, the BOP cannot confidently say that all foreign language materials in its chapel libraries have been entered into the CLD or reviewed prior to entering circulation. These conditions create serious risks that foreign language materials with hateful, violent, or discriminatory language may be circulating within the BOP's chapel libraries. For example, at one institution we found ten foreign language books in circulation that were not entered into the CLD. Two of the books were written by an author that both the BOP and FBI considered potentially dangerous. Because the books were not recorded in CLD, the BOP or CSB may not be aware that these books are accessible to inmates.

We recommend that the BOP perform a comprehensive review of the CLD at the CSB to strengthen existing policy or develop new policy that ensures an accurate inventory and timely review of newly introduced English and foreign language texts with suitability determinations that can more easily be shared among all BOP institutions; provide resources to assist chaplains in evaluating existing library materials, including foreign language media, that have not been previously reviewed and entered into the CLD; and ensure that those titles are added to the CLD or its replacement if applicable.

### **Advisories Regarding Inappropriate Chapel Library Materials**

At times, the BOP's Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU), CSB, and other entities within the BOP, issue advisories regarding publications that are identified as questionable, inappropriate, dangerous, or in conflict with BOP policy.<sup>17</sup> However, we found that these advisories and other guidance related to religious materials were not always followed or considered by chaplaincy or other BOP staff when adding or reviewing chapel library materials. For example, we learned that in April 2019, two CSCs emailed chaplains in their regions and recommended removing specific materials from their chapel libraries prior to our site visits. Several of the publications referred to in the CSCs emails were already identified as inappropriate by CSB, CTU, or other experts and should have been removed several years ago. The list also included a general warning about books and videos by a high-level, well-known terrorist and other concerning authors that were designated as "accepted" in the CLD listings at the time the emails were sent. During our fieldwork, we found books by some of these authors that were in circulation but not listed in the CLD. We further determined that the BOP did not disseminate information about, or limit access to, materials by some of these authors that FBI terrorism experts had restricted inmates subject to Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) from obtaining due to the risks of promoting terrorism and threatening the safety and security of the institution.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, two long standing advisories issued in 2004 and 2006, that were in circulation as recently as 2017 and 2019, warned chaplaincy staff of concerns regarding a specific religious publication that had the potential to support radicalization. During our audit, we found evidence that the publication was accessible to inmates in at least two locations and had been purchased by one of these institutions as recently as 2018. In the 2004 advisory memo, it warned that the publication was not a faithful interpretation of the text on which it was based and cited at least six instances where the translators had inserted inflammatory or disrespectful comments. The advisory instructed chaplains to remove this publication from library circulation and to no longer purchase it with BOP funds. Further, the advisory directed chaplains to refrain from confiscating inmate owned copies as BOP policy did not prohibit inmates from personally owning it. Then, in 2006, a separate advisory concerning the same publication was issued which stated that it contained significant radical content that endorsed violence, threatened the safety and security of BOP intuitions, and jeopardized public safety. This 2006 advisory concluded that the publication violated BOP

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<sup>17</sup> An "advisory" is an intelligence report summary published by the BOP and sent to BOP institutions to inform staff of security issues such as identifying, intercepting, and preventing objectionable publications from entering the BOP's institutions. The CTU is an intelligence unit created to assist in identifying terrorist inmates and provide for the coordination of translation services and analysis of terrorist inmate communications.

<sup>18</sup> A Special Administrative Measure (SAM) directive is an order authorized by the Attorney General that requires 100-percent live monitoring by the sponsoring law enforcement agency of an inmate's communications and can impose other restrictions on an inmate, such as limiting communications to immediate family. A SAM can be authorized by the Attorney General for any inmate who is deemed to pose a current threat to national security or public safety.

policy and could be rejected from entering BOP facilities. However, the 2006 advisory did not specifically address the 2004 guidance asking chaplains to refrain from confiscating inmate owned copies.

At the institution that purchased copies of the publication in 2018, we found copies accessible to inmates through the library and a faith group locker. Chaplaincy staff at this institution stated they were aware of the 2004 and 2006 guidance regarding the publication; however, the chaplains could not sufficiently explain why the publication was still accessible to inmates in the chapel or why they purchased copies with BOP funds after the advisories were issued.<sup>19</sup> We also asked the CSB Administrator how it was possible that, as recently as 2018, an institution could have purchased several copies of this restricted publication. The Branch Administrator opined that the book was probably purchased due to a lack of consistency and knowledge regarding the policy of the publication. In this instance, we agree that the inconsistent advisories and the lack of a policy requiring centralized retention of such advisories probably created confusion among the chaplaincy at this specific institution, and potentially other institutions throughout the BOP.

At the second institution we also found copies of the publication in its chapel library. This institution is part of a complex that houses maximum and high security level inmates. At this location we asked a staff BOP linguist, who was certified by the FBI, if the publication should have been accessible to inmates. The linguist told us that in his opinion because the publication encourages violence against certain faith groups it should not be allowed in the institution. The linguist also stated that he does not believe the BOP's institutions know the full extent of what is in their libraries, especially in terms of foreign language books.

Because of the lack of coordination between the CTU, CSB, and chaplains in the field, we also asked the CSB Administrator how information about restricted texts is disseminated to field chaplains. We were told that, since 2012, the CSB has offered chaplains religious extremism courses that cover such topics, including instruction on concerning or otherwise restricted religious books and videos. However, we found that these training materials lacked pertinent information regarding the authors and publications that have been identified by CTU and CSB as security threats. The training also did not specifically mention the 2004 and 2006 advisories or highlight the BOP's policies against purchasing certain publications with BOP funds.

We also identified risks associated with the lack of protocols for handling religious items that have been removed from chapel libraries due to security concerns. Currently, there is no BOP protocol in place that provides directions to institutions on how they are to dispose of items considered inappropriate. Several chaplains we interviewed stated that they have not been instructed on what to do with materials after removal from the libraries. This is particularly concerning if the item is considered a sacred text. At one facility we found that a chaplain kept several copies of one of the previously referenced books that he had removed from circulation in his desk drawer for several years because he did not know how to appropriately dispose of the material. Without a standardized protocol for removing and properly handling materials identified for removal from chapel libraries, there is a risk that these items may subsequently be erroneously placed back into circulation and become accessible to inmates again. We recommend that the BOP develop a centralized repository for BOP Chaplaincy Services related advisories to better ensure that

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<sup>19</sup> The CLD for this institution listed one copy of the publication in a "review" status and it should not have been in circulation. Further, the multiple copies of the publication found in the faith group locker and purchased with BOP funds were not recorded in the CLD.

important guidance for chaplains is current and consistent and provide chaplains with clear instructions for proper handling and disposal of religious texts deemed inappropriate for inmate use.

### **Volunteer Faith Providers - Inmate Contact**

Chaplains are required to monitor the activities of external faith providers, including any worship services and study groups they conduct. The level of required monitoring depends on the type of provider. Institutions can supplement the BOP's monitoring policy to define intermittent and constant supervision in terms of time (e.g., every 20 minutes). However, the chaplains with whom we spoke generally agreed that monitoring entails either constant or periodic visual observation of the service or other activity whether conducted by volunteer faith providers or inmates while it occurs.

Further, with limited exceptions, BOP policy prohibits external service providers, including those for Chaplaincy Services, from contacting inmates outside of the prison setting to reduce opportunities for inappropriate relationships to develop. All contractors and volunteers with the BOP, including those for Chaplaincy Services, receive training regarding this policy and certify that they are aware and understand it. However, during our fieldwork, a BOP staff member shared concerns with us about volunteers potentially developing personal relationships with inmates and being manipulated into engaging in prohibited behaviors, such as transporting contraband or providing their personal contact information.

To determine if there were any indications of prohibited contact between volunteer faith providers and inmates, we judgmentally selected a total of 79 volunteers from the files of the institutions we visited. For each volunteer, we obtained telephone numbers that were provided to the institution on volunteer applications or other documentation contained in the volunteer files. We then used this information to query TRUIVIEW, a link analysis application that can compare data across multiple BOP Trust Fund applications, to search for activity between the volunteers' information and individual inmate accounts. Through our analysis, we initially found that 22 of the 79 volunteers had links to inmate accounts that could have been an indication of prohibited contact. Upon further testing we determined that 18 of these 22 volunteers with links to inmate accounts either did not represent inappropriate conduct by the volunteer or we were unable to assess the propriety of the link.<sup>20</sup> However, for the 4 remaining volunteers, we identified 266 instances of improper contact between the volunteers and inmates.

When an inmate attempts to contact someone outside of the institution by telephone or email, the recipient must consent to receive the communication. Therefore, these 4 volunteers (or someone with access to their

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<sup>20</sup> We note that one of these 18 volunteers received a telephone call from an inmate at the same institution where they volunteered just a few days before the individual applied to serve as a volunteer faith provider. According to the BOP records, the volunteer disclosed his prior relationship with the inmate and the BOP did not object. When we inquired about the telephone contact with SIS, we were informed that a subsequent investigation determined that the volunteer had served as the inmate's pastor prior to his incarceration. We were also told that, in March 2020, SIS counseled the volunteer on the BOP's policy prohibiting outside communication with inmates. Although the telephone communication was not prohibited by BOP policy because the individual was not serving as a volunteer at that time, we note that generally allowing individuals with current or prior associations with inmates to serve as volunteer faith providers may create unnecessary security risks in some cases. For example, individuals with nefarious intent and existing inmate relationships may see volunteer service as an opportunity to gain access to inmates under the guise of religious service. Although we do not make a formal recommendation related to this situation, we urge the BOP to consider ways to address this potential risk.

email or telephone number), consented to receive the communication or took direct action to email, send funds, or visit the inmate. These 4 volunteers performed their volunteer service at four of the facilities we visited. We discussed these potentially prohibited contacts with SIS representatives at each location. The results of these conversations are noted below.

**Volunteer 1** received one email from an inmate at the same institution where they volunteered. This individual had served as a volunteer with the BOP since 2006 and the communication occurred in 2014. Although we alerted SIS to the communication in March 2020, as of December 2020, an investigation had not yet been conducted. In December 2020, SIS stated an investigation would be forthcoming.

**Volunteer 2** exchanged five emails from an inmate at another BOP facility. As a result of our analysis and the identification of the email communications, the BOP suspended the volunteer in early 2019. However, the volunteer was later reinstated by the Warden after “further scrutiny.” The BOP did not provide any additional details regarding its decision to reinstate the volunteer.

**Volunteer 3** received nine telephone calls from an inmate while housed at two different institutions between January 2016 and November 2016. The volunteer also made a funds transfer to the same inmate in 2016. When we discussed these events with SIS at this facility, they stated that because the inmate was housed at facilities other than the one where Volunteer 3 was providing assistance, the communication was not prohibited. We inquired whether CSB agreed with this SIS assessment and CSB told us that it did not agree because BOP policy clearly states that volunteers must not have contact with inmates outside of volunteer service and makes no exception for communicating with inmates at other institutions. SIS representatives also stated that they had no record of a funds transfer; however, our link analysis found clear evidence of a transfer. When we followed up with the BOP in March 2021, we were told that Volunteer 3 was terminated in February 2021 due to the unauthorized contact we identified.

**Volunteer 4** exchanged 250 emails with an inmate at another institution between November 2016 to July 2019. Initially, SIS representatives stated that Volunteer 4 was part of the BOP’s Mentoring and Transitional Program, and that because BOP policy allows volunteers in the program to communicate with inmates, the communications we identified were authorized.<sup>21</sup> However, when we asked the BOP to provide evidence to support the volunteer’s participation in the program, SIS told us that the volunteer was not part of the program and was not authorized to communicate with any inmates outside of volunteer service. Based on the BOP’s subsequent response, the 250 instances of email communication violated BOP policy. In March 2021, the BOP informed us that remedial action against Volunteer 4 was forthcoming.

We also found that Volunteer 4 provided letters of endorsement for several volunteer applicants despite a previous suspension for policy violations. As noted above, the BOP requires its Chaplaincy Services volunteer applicants to provide one letter of endorsement. Additionally, the sponsor of the endorsement must not have been in an unfavorable standing with any BOP component. Because a single endorsement letter will satisfy this important application requirement for new volunteers, we believe that the BOP should

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<sup>21</sup> Volunteer participants in the BOP’s Mentoring and Transitional Program are permitted to engage in program-related contact with inmates to whom they have been assigned. Nevertheless, BOP policy states that mentor volunteers must submit a written request for approval for telephone or written communications with inmates in the program and to document all instances of communication.

adhere to its policies related to vetting volunteers and apply increased scrutiny to endorsements from previously disciplined volunteers. The BOP should also ensure that those reviewing the volunteer application are aware of the prior discipline when determining the weight given to the endorsement in their decision-making.<sup>22</sup>

Given the many instances of inappropriate contact and instances of apparent reliance on endorsements from previously disciplined volunteers, we believe that the BOP can strengthen its volunteer vetting process by conducting testing similar to ours to better identify volunteers that could pose a risk to BOP institutions. Therefore, we recommend that the BOP conduct a periodic analysis of volunteer contact information through its TRUIVIEW system and clearly document any exception that was granted to specific volunteers, such as those in mentoring and transitional programs. The BOP must also ensure its volunteers and inmates are aware of its policy on prohibited contact and apply increased scrutiny to endorsements offered by previously disciplined volunteers.

### **Volunteer Faith Provider Data Management**

Currently, the BOP manages volunteer data in its National Automated Volunteer System (NAVS) database.<sup>23</sup> At the start of a volunteer's service, BOP staff establish a profile for each volunteer that includes personal information, including name, physical description, contact information, sponsor organization details, volunteer location, and volunteer service status. If the volunteer has been terminated, the file should also contain reasons for the termination and accompanying documentation.

During our fieldwork we found three volunteer faith providers from different institutions that were terminated due to BOP policy violations, including attempting to provide an inmate with personal contact information, communicating with an inmate outside of volunteer services, and attempting to provide inmates with an unauthorized item. We reviewed NAVS volunteer profile information for each of the three terminated volunteers and found that the NAVS profiles for two of the three volunteers listed their status as "inactive" rather than "discontinuation", which would have alerted other institutions that the services of these volunteers were no longer permitted in any BOP institution. We also found that none of the three profiles included the reason for termination or any other supporting documentation, such as a termination letter.

Without complete information, such as the reason for termination, the BOP runs the risk of permitting volunteers previously terminated for prohibited conduct from entering volunteer service at other BOP institutions. Therefore, we recommend that the BOP ensure that NAVS volunteer data profiles are accurate, complete, updated, and contain all necessary information so that BOP volunteers terminated for violating

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<sup>22</sup> Volunteer 4 provided the sole letters of endorsement to support at least seven volunteer applicants. Although we cannot confirm how much weight the BOP gave to these particular letters of endorsement, the BOP appears to have allowed them to at least satisfy this specific application requirement.

<sup>23</sup> In October 2018, the BOP transitioned from the Volunteer and Contractor Information (VCI) system to the NAVS database, and current and past volunteer data was migrated into NAVS. NAVS was reported to provide greater functionality including Level 1 volunteer tracking and the ability to upload supporting documentation, functions that were not possible with VCI.

BOP policy cannot seek volunteer roles at other BOP institutions.

## Strategies to Improve Chaplaincy Shortages, Faith Diversity Imbalance, and Existing Recruitment Methods

As of March 2020, the BOP's inmate population consisted of over 160,000 inmates, of which approximately 70 percent officially identified with a faith group. During intake processing into the BOP's custody, inmates are asked to state their religious affiliation, if applicable. Those inmates who indicate a religious preference are designated in the BOP's SENTRY system as a member of one of the faith groups identified within the system.<sup>24</sup>

### Chaplaincy Services Staffing Guidelines and Shortages

We found that the BOP's chaplaincy services departments are not staffed according to BOP guidelines at many institutions. The BOP's current policy states that, at a minimum, each chaplaincy services department should be staffed with at least one chaplain and one RSA. This standard translates to a minimum need for 122 chaplains and 122 RSAs throughout the BOP.<sup>25</sup> However, we found that as of March 2020, nearly half of the BOP's institutions had no RSA, three institutions had no chaplain at all, twenty-one institutions employed a single chaplain, and two institutions had only recently filled their only chaplain position after long vacancies. In addition to the minimum staffing level, BOP guidelines also suggest that institutions supplement the minimum requirement with additional chaplains based on inmate population (1 chaplain per 500 inmates) and specific characteristics of the institution, such as being a major medical center, having 2 or more satellite facilities, or the inclusion of a special unit, each of which should have one additional chaplain. Therefore, the BOP's chaplaincy services staffing and supplemental guidelines suggest that a fully staffed chaplaincy would include 357 chaplains and 122 RSAs. As noted earlier, as of March 2020, the BOP's chaplaincy staff included only 236 chaplains and 64 RSAs, which is approximately 30 percent below what the BOP's guidelines consider to be a fully staffed chaplaincy for the inmate population.

Based on these minimum and supplemental guidelines, we reviewed the BOP's chaplaincy population by institution and found that as of February 2020, more than two-thirds of the BOP institutions did not meet these guidelines. Table 2 below details the 10 BOP institutions where chaplaincy services departments are most understaffed per BOP guidelines.

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<sup>24</sup> Inmates generally may choose to update or change their affiliation while incarcerated. Inmates who claim an affiliation with a religious organization not in SENTRY are categorized as "other" while those who do not claim a preference are tracked as "no preference" or "unknown."

<sup>25</sup> Although some institutions have administrative positions in addition to the RSA, such as mentor coordinator and Life Connections Program assistant, those positions only service the programs to which they are assigned.

Table 2

BOP Institutions with Greatest Chaplain Disparity  
As of February 2020

	Institutions	Inmate Population <sup>a</sup>	Number of Chaplains <sup>b</sup>	Chaplains to Inmate Ratio*	Major Medical Facility, Special Unit or Other Program <sup>c</sup>	Number of Chaplains Suggested by BOP Guidelines
1	Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Seagoville	1,993	1	1:1,993	√	5
2	FCI Jesup	1,567	1	1:1,567	√	5
3	Federal Correctional Complex (FCC) Beaumont	4,865	4	1:1,216		10
4	FCI Forest City	3,203	3	1:1,068		7
5	FCI Lompoc	2,842	3	1:947	√	7
6	FCI Petersburg	2,781	3	1:927	√	7
7	FCC Victorville	4,139	5	1:828		9
8	FCC Yazoo City	3,985	5	1:797		8
9	FCC Coleman	6,141	9	1:682		13
10	FCC Terre Haute	2,606	4	1:652	√	8

<sup>a</sup> Inmate population of listed institution as of February 20, 2020.

<sup>b</sup> Chaplain assignment as of March 28, 2020.

<sup>c</sup> The BOP's Chaplaincy Services staffing guidelines suggest an additional chaplain for institutions that are (a) major medical facilities; (b) have two or more satellite programs, such as a camp, SMU, and CMU; or (c) operates a special initiative or program, such as the Life Connections Program.

Source: OIG Analysis

We were particularly concerned to find that some BOP institutions were without any chaplaincy staff. During our audit, we saw a peak of at least three institutions that were without a chaplain. When we asked how institutions handle the absence of a chaplain, BOP officials told us that religious services were conducted by external faith providers, or in most cases, inmates themselves. We also were told that the required monitoring of these non-chaplaincy led services was generally conducted by other BOP staff

members, such as correctional officers. Further, according to the BOP, when an inmate required pastoral care or guidance, chaplains from other institutions or the CSB might be temporarily assigned to the institution to assist. However, even with these ad hoc adjustments, we believe that critical tasks may not be accomplished, including purchasing and reviewing library materials and conducting certain faith-based programming. Moreover, in the absence of a chaplain, other BOP staff do not have the same faith-specific training that chaplains receive and may not be able to identify risks when monitoring religious services, and some staff members told us that a void may be created and filled by inmates who seek power and influence as faith group leaders. Finally, the absence of a consistent trained religious official deprives inmates and staff of the expertise and guidance for spiritual matters in times of individual crisis, such as the illness or death of family members.

When we inquired as to why the BOP was not meeting its own guidelines for chaplaincy staffing, we were given various explanations. First, according to BOP officials, the BOP in 2017 required all departments to reduce positions through attrition. As a result, BOP chaplaincy positions were reduced from 257 (in September 2016) to 212 (in September 2018). According to some officials, the chaplaincy services is still recovering from the reduction of positions. We were also told that because chaplains are not considered “custody” staff, chaplaincy positions may continue to go unfilled in favor of custody staff positions to maximize operational security.<sup>26</sup> Although the BOP continues to operate its chaplaincy services departments at a severe deficit in chaplaincy staff based on its own guidelines, since 2018, some progress has been made as CSB reported 236 chaplains in March 2020.

### **Faith Representation Disparities**

The BOP chaplaincy staffing guidelines are based on factors such as the size of the institution and any special operations that exist at a specific location, such as a major medical center. However, one factor that is not considered within the staffing guidelines is the hiring or placement of chaplains based on the religious needs of a particular institution or even BOP-wide. We believe this hiring approach has contributed, at least in part, to the significant imbalance between inmate faith groups and those who are qualified and available to provide religious services.

As of March 2020, 199 of the BOP’s 236 chaplains (84 percent) represented a Protestant Christian faith (which includes Adventist). However, inmates who identify with the Protestant Christian faith make up approximately 34 percent of the total inmates that claim a faith preference. Among the remaining 37 chaplains, only 7 additional faith groups are represented, leaving at least 16 groups without any chaplains who share their faith. While the BOP expects its chaplains to be pluralistic and to meet the religious needs of all inmates regardless of faith, it is not always possible for them to do so. There are many instances in which a practitioner of a particular faith is needed to perform a specific service, ceremony, or religious rite. For example, only a Catholic priest can perform mass, administer last rites, or provide confession for Catholic inmates.

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<sup>26</sup> Custody staff is comprised of sworn law officers who provide supervision, care, and correctional treatment of inmates by enforcing rules and regulations governing facility security, inmate accountability and inmate conduct to ensure judicial sanctions are carried out and inmates remain in custody.

When factoring in the external providers that are intended to fill the gaps, nearly half of all faith providers (chaplains, contractors, and volunteers) are adherents to a Protestant Christian faith. By comparison, the Catholic faith, which is the second largest affiliation among inmates, making up approximately 25 percent of inmates with religious affiliations, is represented by just 7 percent of the BOP's chaplains and 16 percent of its total faith providers. Exacerbating this problem is the fact that, similar to chaplains, when the BOP retains the services of external faith providers, it does not place them in proportion to the needs of a particular institution. As Table 3 shows, in some instances this approach can lead to the number of faith providers available outnumbering the number of inmates they are retained to serve. Although these volunteers are not necessarily at the same location and likely not providing volunteer services simultaneously, we believe it is indicative of the BOP's need to assess its strategy for recruiting and retaining volunteers based on need.

Table 3

Inmate Population and Chaplaincy Services Resources by Faith Group at the BOP\*

Faith Group	Inmate Population by Faith Group	Type of Chaplaincy Services Resource			Inmate to Resource Ratio
		Chaplains	Contractors	Volunteers	
American Indian	5,743	0	6	27	174:1
Atheist <sup>a</sup>	182	0	0	0	1:1
Baha'i	0	0	0	0	0:0
Buddhist	1,592	2	1	69	22:1
Catholic	29,553	15	46	550	48:1
Christian Science	1	0	0	14	1:14
Church of Christ	2,149	0	0	52	41:1
Hindu	322	0	0	15	21:1
Humanist	72	0	0	0	72:0
Jehovah Witness	982	0	1	457	2:1
Jewish	3,298	4	32	87	27:1
Messianic	2,452	1	1	17	129:1
Moorish Science Temple	2,061	0	1	2	687:1
Mormon	606	0	0	160	4:1
Muslim	11,073	13	12	38	176:1
Nation of Islam	2,313	0	7	6	178:1
Non-Trinitarian	428	0	0	42	10:1
Orthodox Christian	457	2	3	22	17:1
Pagan	4,463	0	0	3	1,488:1
Pentecostal	26	0	0	171	1:7
Protestant Christian including Adventist <sup>a</sup>	40,797	199	5	1,852	22:1
Rastafarian	3,387	0	0	2	1694:1
Santeria	3,455	0	0	2	1728:1
Sikh	48	0	0	0	48:0
Other Faiths <sup>b</sup>	2,870	0	2	110	26:1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>118,330</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>3,698</b>	<b>29:1</b>

\* The data used in this table was compiled by the BOP at different periods of time. Specifically, inmate population faith affiliation data is current as of February 2020, while chaplaincy data is current as of April 2020. The most recent available data for contract and volunteer faith providers was from the FY 2019 Annual Chaplaincy Services Branch Report because the BOP does not maintain this information on a continuous basis. Further, the data above reflects the overall representation of faith service providers in the BOP. It does not reflect actual faith group representation based on individual institution populations, or the availability of resources for religious services.

<sup>a</sup> SENTRY includes individual designations for Adventist and Atheist faith groups. However, the BOP considers the Adventist faith group to be represented by Protestant Christian chaplains and Atheists to be represented by all chaplains.

<sup>b</sup> The "other faiths" category includes inmates who identify with a faith not specifically listed in SENTRY.

Source: BOP

The BOP officials at CSB and institution chaplains have recognized that the disparity among faith groups is a problem which has been highlighted in each of its annual reports submitted to the Regional Directors since at least 2013. However, we believe the issue has remained largely unaddressed because the BOP has not taken a strategic approach to its chaplaincy hiring efforts or its efforts to retain contract or volunteer faith providers to fill the representation gaps.

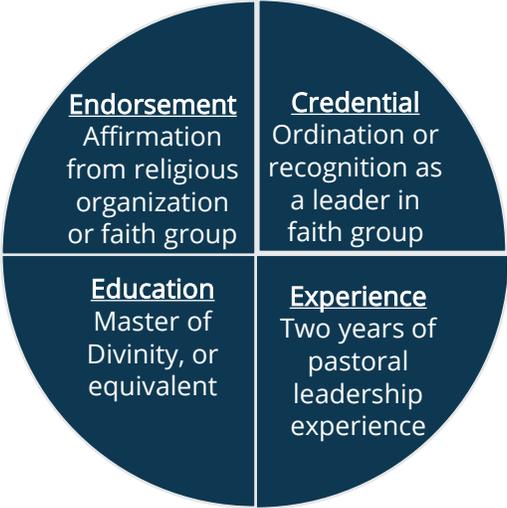
### Position Requirements that Hinder Chaplaincy Recruitment Efforts

BOP officials told us that several factors have impacted their efforts to recruit a more representative chaplaincy. Two of the most significant limiting factors appear to be the BOP’s educational requirements and age restrictions that must be satisfied to qualify for a Chaplain position.

The BOP has long considered a formal education in world religion and ministry to be essential to the pluralistic environment of correctional settings and requires Chaplains to have a Master of Divinity degree, or equivalent. Figure 1 shows the technical qualifications that the BOP requires for prospective chaplains.

Figure 1

#### Technical Requirements for Prospective BOP Chaplains



Source: BOP

However, many faith groups recognized by the BOP do not have formal educational pathways to attain leadership positions in their faith. Graduate level programs are often found in seminary schools and are commonly obtained prior to ordination in many Protestant Christian denominations. While other faith traditions may have graduate programs directed to their faith, they may not be as prevalent and may not be required to become a religious authority within their faith. We believe the BOP’s formal educational requirement may exclude otherwise qualified practitioners from applying and serving as chaplains because

they may belong to faith groups without a wider organizational or educational structure, or because they have fewer practitioners in the United States that can meet these requirements.

In addition to the educational requirements noted above, chaplains must also be under the age of 37 when their BOP employment begins. In certain instances, this age requirement can be waived for an applicant with prior law enforcement or military service.<sup>27</sup> This age requirement, which is typically applied to law enforcement positions, is applied to chaplains because they may be called upon to assist correctional staff in certain circumstances. However, since 1976, the BOP has, at times, waived the age requirement for chaplain applicants of specific faith groups. Specifically, we learned that pursuant to DOJ Order 1200.0, part 1, chapter 1-6, B.3, the BOP may waive the age restriction for applicants who have been endorsed by the Catholic, Islamic, or Jewish faiths. When we asked the BOP why the age restriction waivers were limited to only these three faith groups, the BOP stated that only the Department of Justice could waive age requirements for other faiths and it had not sought the Department's assistance to expand age requirement waivers to more applicants.

In view of the current staffing level of chaplains within the BOP and the difficulties in recruitment related to the BOP's education requirements and age restriction, we recommend that the BOP reassess the existing education requirement for chaplaincy eligibility to enhance the prospect of attaining the BOP's target chaplain staffing level, or evaluate the benefits of implementing religion-specific educational requirements to account for differing requirements among religions. Further, the BOP should coordinate with the Department of Justice to determine if age waivers should be expanded to a broader group of chaplaincy applicants.

### **Internal Conditions and Hiring Processes That Hinder Chaplaincy Recruitment Efforts**

In addition to the educational requirements and age restriction, CSB and regional office staff also pointed to several internal conditions that hinder the BOP's recruitment efforts. First, because chaplains are generally classified at higher pay grades than "custody staff", more custody staff can be hired with the same funding.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, chaplaincy vacancies may remain unfilled or unaddressed if Wardens prioritize less expensive custody positions over higher salaried chaplaincy positions. Further, when chaplain positions are advertised, they are often announced for multiple institutions at the same time. As a result, chaplain candidates may apply for multiple vacancies and subsequently qualify for positions at several BOP institutions, resulting in BOP institutions competing for the same candidates. Timeliness is also a factor that is impacted by competing offers because hiring certification lists with qualified candidates are only valid for up to 90 days and often expire before a backup selection can be made. According to one BOP human resources staff member, their region could only fill approximately 40 percent of the chaplain vacancies posted in that region due, in part, to the expiration of certification lists that may have qualified candidates beyond the first candidate selected from a particular list. When we reviewed chaplain hiring decisions for the period

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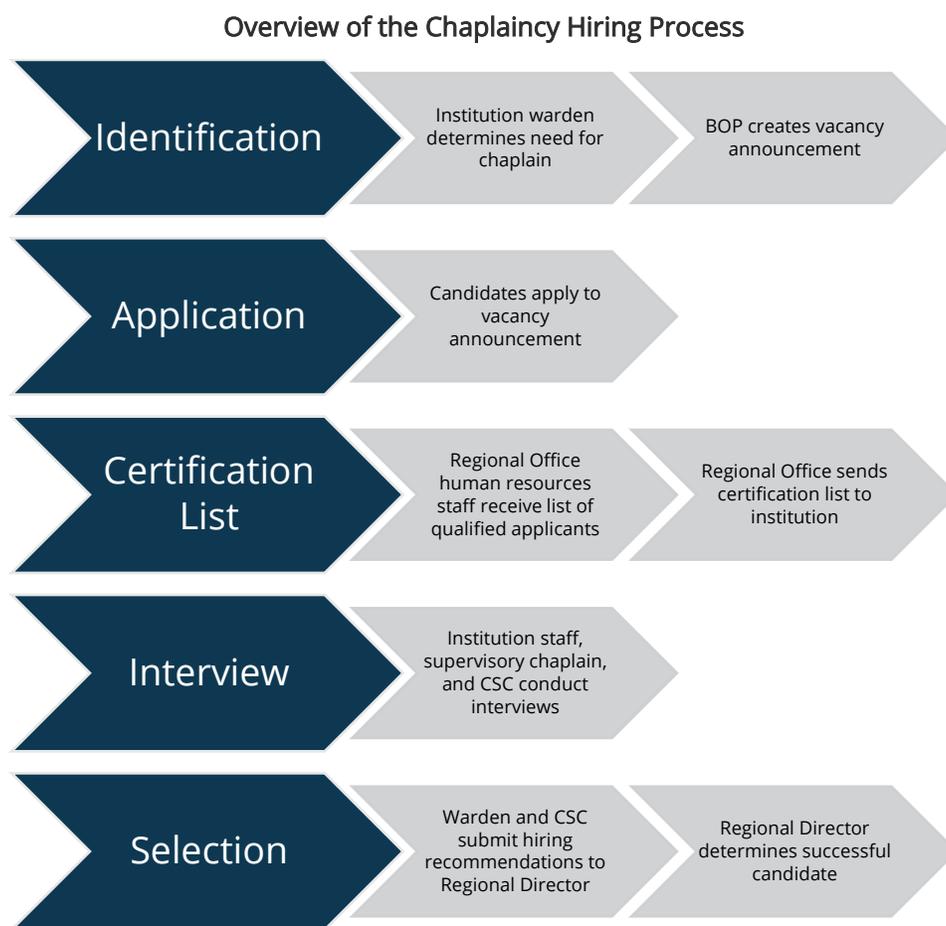
<sup>27</sup> Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 3307, the Department of Justice may determine and fix the maximum age limit for an original appointment to a position as a law enforcement officer. The Attorney General has determined that the law enforcement age restriction also applies to initial appointments into BOP law enforcement positions. BOP policy further applies this restriction to chaplains along with other correctional staff.

<sup>28</sup> According to the BOP, Chaplains are typically hired at a GS-12/13 on the federal pay scale; whereas custody staff are typically hired at the GS-5/7 pay grade.

of January 2019 through December 2019, we found that of the 34 positions announced, only half resulted in the selection of a candidate.

Individual wardens are responsible for initiating the hiring process for chaplain positions at the BOP’s 122 institutions. The institution’s human resources staff coordinates with regional office staff to make the vacancy announcement available to the public and coordinates interviews with the CSC, supervisory chaplain, and other institution staff. The final hiring decision for a chaplain is made by the Regional Director, with input from the CSC and individual warden. Figure 2 depicts the multiple steps in the chaplaincy hiring process.

Figure 2



Source: BOP

Because of the complex challenges the BOP faces in recruiting a complete and diverse chaplaincy, we believe that the BOP should reassess its chaplaincy recruitment efforts and take a more strategic approach that continues to focus on the chaplaincy services’ mission, but also accounts for the unique attributes of individual BOP institutions. We believe shifting to this type of recruitment strategy along with other innovative solutions could result in a more robust and diverse chaplaincy that better reflects the diversity of the inmate population. Further, as discussed in previous sections, reducing chaplaincy shortages will also

improve religious services monitoring coverage and reduce the risks posed by inmate led services and minimally vetted volunteers.

### External Factors That Hinder Chaplaincy Recruitment Efforts

Finally, BOP officials told us that recruitment has been affected by the declining number of people entering faith professions. For example, Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported that the Roman Catholic faith has experienced declining numbers of men entering the priesthood for several years. Specifically, in the United States, the number of Catholic priests has declined from approximately 59,000 in 1970 to just under 37,000 in 2018, although the United States' self-identified Catholic population has increased from 54.1 million to 76.3 million in the same span of time.<sup>29</sup> Some of the BOP's Catholic chaplains we spoke with were likewise not surprised by the difficulty of staffing positions within the corrections environment because of the broader challenge of staffing Catholic parishes in the United States.

Similarly, in the United States, the Islamic faith is experiencing an apparent decline in the number of individuals entering faith leadership and a shortage of imams. According to a 2013 study conducted by the Pew Research Center, nearly 60 percent of U.S. mosques were without a full-time paid imam and relied on volunteers to fill the role. Currently, 6 percent of the BOP's chaplains are Muslim, while 9.4 percent of inmates identified as Muslim. According to the CSB Administrator, the challenges in recruiting chaplains for the Islamic faith have persisted within the BOP for years. In fact, the BOP had no more than 13 Muslim chaplains in the past 6 years even though the number of inmates who affiliate with the Islamic faith has grown during that same timeframe.<sup>30</sup>

### Potential Improvements to the BOP's Existing Chaplaincy Recruitment Efforts

Although the CSB does not have the authority to make local hiring decisions, we believe that it should be involved in the development and implementation of policies that can expand and diversify chaplain candidate pools and more effectively use contract and volunteer faith providers to fill the chaplaincy staff gaps. At present, the CSB provides only limited assistance to chaplaincy field operations and staff.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), "Frequently Requested Church Statistics," <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

<sup>30</sup> In a previous review of Muslim Services in the BOP, the OIG found the BOP had an inadequate number of chaplains and other religious service providers to meet the needs of its inmates who identified as being of Islamic faith. At the time, 6 percent of the inmate population identified as Muslim and the OIG recommended that the BOP develop a strategy to recruit more Muslim service providers within its chaplaincy and chaplaincy services departments. In the nearly 16 years that have passed since that OIG recommendation, the number of inmates identifying with the Muslim faith has more than doubled. U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG), *A Review of the Bureau of Prisons' Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers*. Oversight and Review Division (April 2004), <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/special/0404/final.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> The services provided by the CSB are primarily performed by its three Chaplaincy Services Coordinators (CSC) who are based at institutions within their regions of responsibility. These CSCs serve a large constituency as each CSC is responsible for 2 regional territories that are each comprised of approximately 20 institutions and any other collocated

*Continued*

In the 1990s, the BOP established its Chaplain Trainee Program (CTP), which is an on-site training program that allows current BOP employees to acquire the necessary skills and experience to become a chaplain. Since its inception, approximately 27 chaplain candidates have participated in the program. In response to a 2004 OIG report that highlighted a significant shortage in chaplains of Islamic faith, the BOP incorporated the CTP into its effort to attract a greater number of Muslim chaplains. In addition, because the BOP recognized that the educational requirements were barriers for potential candidates that do not necessarily have educational pathways to religious leadership, the BOP hoped to also recruit external trainee chaplains of Islamic faith through the CTP. However, the BOP's efforts to increase Muslim chaplaincy using the CTP were unsuccessful, resulting in only one Muslim chaplain trained through the CTP since 2006. During our audit, we learned that the BOP was no longer placing emphasis on underrepresented faith groups when selecting candidates for the CTP and institutions were not seeking CTP candidates outside of current BOP employees, further limiting the potential applicant pool. We believe that the BOP should reassess this decision as part of a more strategic recruitment effort. Since 2000, 22 chaplains have participated in the CTP, although only 4 were of members of non-Protestant Christian faith groups.<sup>32</sup> In addition, we were made aware of one trainee in the program at the time of our review who is scheduled to complete the program in December 2021.

According to BOP chaplaincy staff, one of the major challenges with the current CTP is that positions are limited and difficult to secure even if there are high levels of interest at specific institutions. For example, one Supervisory Chaplain stated that several BOP staff members at his institution would be interested and qualified to join the CTP if positions were available; however, each time he had tried to obtain a CTP position the request was denied by CSB officials. When we inquired with CSB as to why such requests were denied we were told that CSB no longer controls the placement of CTP positions because the available positions were lost due to the BOP's budget reductions. We recommend that the BOP review the current CTP model to expand opportunities for current BOP staff and qualified external applicants with flexibilities that would avoid disqualifying otherwise suitable candidates due to restrictive educational barriers or pastoral experience requirements. We believe reasonable flexibilities can be particularly effective in recruiting existing BOP staff who presumably have experience within and understand the organization along with a desire to provide the pastoral needs of the inmate population.

## **Recruitment Strategies for Contract and Volunteer Faith Providers**

Contract faith providers are trained clergy or spiritual advisors who help the BOP fill some of the voids in their chaplaincy ranks. However, we found that the use of contract faith providers has generally declined over the past several years as illustrated in Figure 3. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, the BOP employed 201 contract faith providers. By FY 2020, the BOP had only 117 contract faith providers available. Contract faith providers undergo a screening process that includes a moderate background investigation conducted by the Office of Personnel Management.

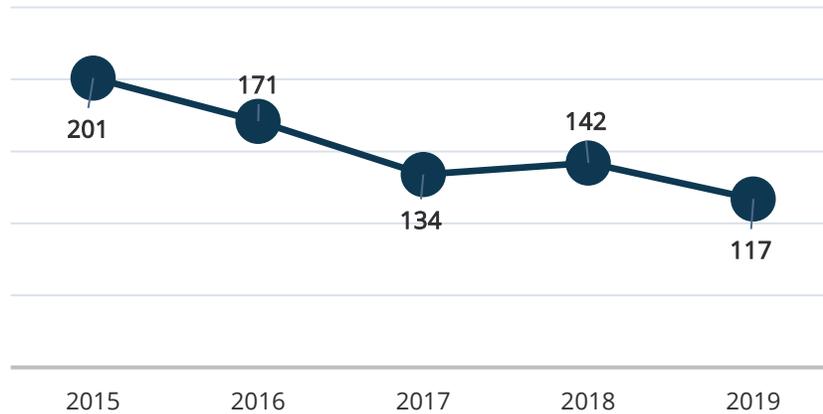
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facilities. CSCs serve as liaisons between CSB, regional offices, and the individual institutions regarding chaplaincy services' needs and they work closely with supervisory chaplains. They also provide training to chaplaincy services staff and work with regional offices to secure additional funding allocation for religious needs and help institutions prepare for Program Reviews, which are part of the BOP's quality assurance process.

<sup>32</sup> The CSB's records did not contain information for all CTP participants' faith traditions or whether the individuals completed the program.

Figure 3

BOP Contract Faith Providers from 2015 to 2020



Source: BOP Data

We found that the primary reasons for the declining use of contract faith providers are costs and local resource availability. In most cases, the costs of these contract faith providers come directly from institution level budgets which often do not have the resources to pay for contractors. Chaplaincy services department budgets vary from institution to institution and for FY 2019 allotments ranged from \$8,400 for an institution with a projected inmate population of 1,400 to \$30,500 for a pretrial facility with 1,400 inmates. According to BOP officials, the budgets for each chaplaincy services department are determined by the BOP Central Office based on the facility's inmate population, special programs, and the type of institution. Once established, chaplains at the institutions are responsible for ensuring that their allotted budget covers all necessary religious expenses. As a result, for many institutions the cost of contractors, although relatively low, is still cost prohibitive. Additionally, as with chaplains, many institutions have found it difficult to find qualified and available local contract faith providers due to the demographics in their geographic locations.

In addition to contract faith providers, the BOP deploys volunteers to support its religious needs. Volunteers are designated as either "Level 1" or "Level 2" volunteers.<sup>33</sup> Level 2 volunteers are only required to be monitored intermittently, while in contrast, Level 1 volunteers are subject to constant supervision. Volunteer faith providers typically are not ordained or professional religious figures within their faith and unlike contract faith providers, who are subjected to more rigorous vetting, volunteers must only provide faith endorsements and letters of recommendation and undergo an NCIC criminal record check.<sup>34</sup>

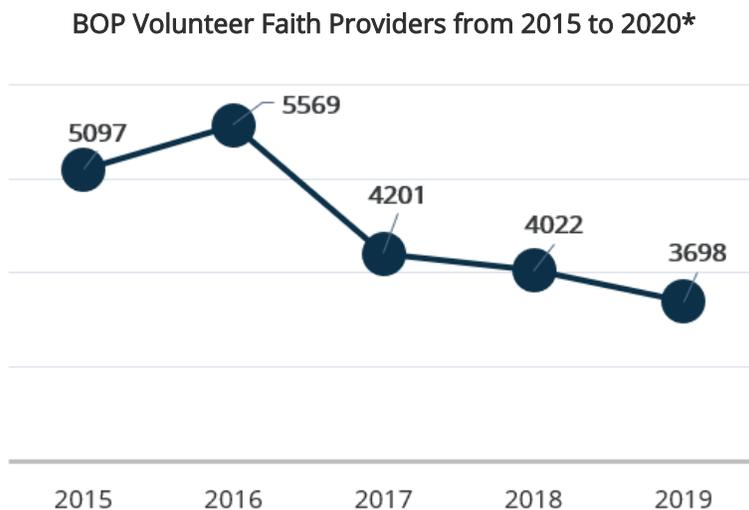
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<sup>33</sup> Level 1 Volunteers are authorized to perform a service four days or less per year for an institution. These volunteers will receive general training; however, they are escorted and monitored continuously during their visit. Level 2 volunteers are authorized to perform a service more than 4 days per year for an institution. These volunteers are monitored intermittently during their visit and required to attend volunteer and/or mentor training.

<sup>34</sup> An NCIC check entails a search of the NCIC database, that includes records of local, state, and other federal law enforcement agencies nationwide.

Volunteers do not need religious credentials, training, or prior experience to serve BOP institutions; however, as with chaplains and contract faith providers, it can be difficult for the BOP to recruit volunteers for each recognized faith group. This is particularly true in more remote and less diverse geographical locations. Figure 4 below indicates the decline of volunteer faith providers from 2015 to 2020.

Figure 4



\* In 2016, the CSB started tracking mentoring volunteers as a separate category from volunteer faith providers. The data in this chart includes both groups of volunteers.

Source: BOP Data, CSB Annual Reports

In addition to developing a strategy to bolster and diversify its chaplaincy staff, the BOP should likewise take a centralized, strategic approach to its recruitment of contract and volunteer faith providers. Depending on resources and needs of each institution, the CSB requires chaplains to search their immediate areas for qualified individuals who are interested in and appropriately suited to provide services within a correctional environment. For example, chaplains may reach out to local seminaries, colleges and other schools, religious orders, churches, local or national faith organizations for external religious services resources. One chaplain explained that his institution had developed a long-standing relationship with the local Catholic Archdiocese to obtain continuous contracted faith representation for the facility. These types of relationships with the local faith community help the chaplaincy services departments reduce interruptions in services. Although not part of the chaplaincy services department, Reentry Affairs Coordinators (RAC) at institutions also assist chaplaincy with recruiting, training, and onboarding of external faith providers.<sup>35</sup> However, there is no guidance provided by the CSB or elsewhere in the BOP that can assist chaplains with best practices and strategies for developing the types of relationships like the one created with the Catholic Archdiocese.

As discussed throughout this report, chaplains have significant, time-consuming responsibilities that are critical to the safety and security of their institutions. We believe the CSB is better situated to establish

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<sup>35</sup> RACs are part of Reentry Affairs, a department at BOP institutions that assists inmates in preparing for adjustment to life outside of prison.

relationships with contract service providers and national faith group organizations that can encourage local members to work with BOP institutions in their area and, in turn, help expand the ranks of credible contract and volunteer providers. Therefore, we recommend the BOP require the CSB to develop a strategy to strengthen its viable volunteer ranks by establishing relationships with local, regional, and national-level religious organizations that can assist in providing guidance and information to their members on volunteering at BOP institutions at the community level.

### **Extended Periods of Absence**

During our review we found that chaplaincy services departments throughout the BOP may experience extended periods of absence among its chaplaincy staff. When extended absences are coupled with vacancies and understaffing, many chaplaincy services departments have experienced significant hardships in providing religious services as a result. Yet, the BOP lacks a strategy that would best prepare it for extended absences, particularly due to military leave, which are likely to continue.

The BOP utilizes available veteran's preference hiring authorities to hire current or former military members when filling chaplain vacancies and, as a result, a significant portion of the BOP's 236 chaplains are also military reservists. Military reservists must meet monthly and annual military obligations and are also subject to deployment or mobilization. We determined that, as of March 2020, 12 of the BOP's 100 military reservist chaplains were on military leave, and 5 of these 12 chaplains were assigned to institutions with the greatest need for chaplains. For example, at one institution, two of its four chaplains were on military leave for over a year and a half and at another institution, one chaplain had been on leave for over 3 years. Additionally, two of the five chaplains at one BOP correctional complex with three institutions had been on military leave for more than 3 months as of March 2020.

The impact of a reduction in chaplaincy services staff due to extended absences is felt by chaplains and inmates alike. Generally, the duties of chaplains on extended leave are dispersed among other chaplains at their institution whenever possible. However, for departments that are already short staffed, requiring staff to absorb additional duties creates a ripple effect. While most periods of military leave are short, longer periods are not uncommon. For example, we learned that at one federal prison camp the chaplaincy services department operated without a chaplain for over a year when the chaplain was deployed for military service. Because federal prison camps are generally only allotted a single chaplain, the BOP was unable to hire a temporary chaplain for the duration of his service. During this time, the institution severely reduced its religious services. Specifically, religious study group sessions were canceled, pastoral care needs were unmet, pastoral visits to restricted housing units were reduced, and the inmates' choir program was eliminated. We believe the BOP should improve its ability to plan for extended absences and establish procedures that ensure continuity of chaplaincy services operations without overburdening staff or relying on inmate-led services. Therefore, we recommend that the BOP develop a sustainable strategy to mitigate staffing shortages caused by chaplaincy absences due to anticipatable periods of extended leave, such as military leave.

### **Utilization of Existing Programs and Technologies**

In 2015 the CSB developed the Subject Matter Resource (SMR) program. This program is an effort to bridge the gaps in religious diversity by establishing internal chaplaincy expertise and points of contact for field chaplains who need assistance in providing pastoral care to inmates outside of their own faith traditions. Under the SMR program, field chaplains volunteer for the role as a collateral duty and act as a resource to

field questions from other chaplains that are funneled to them through CSCs and CSB. If an SMR cannot answer a question through personal knowledge, the SMR is expected to assist with conducting research and other outreach to provide an adequate response to the requestor.

Like the CTP, we believe the SMR program has not met its full potential. We found that the program is largely ineffective because it places an additional burden on short-staffed field chaplains who cannot reasonably respond to requests in a timely manner. Further, SMR chaplains we spoke with stated that they received no additional training or resources to perform this extra duty and several other chaplains stated that they did not use the SMR program because it was faster and easier to draw on their own relationships with other BOP contacts or within their own community. In fact, SMRs are allocated 180 days to respond to SMR requests so they can perform research and consultation with experts outside of the BOP, in addition to their own primary chaplain responsibilities. As a result, the program's own timeliness guidelines contribute to its ineffectiveness.

We believe the CSB is in the best position to maximize the effectiveness of the SMR program. By shifting responsibilities entirely to CSB, the BOP can ensure that chaplains who rely on the program receive timely, consistent responses to inquiries and that information obtained through SMR requests can be disseminated to benefit chaplains across the BOP's 122 institutions. Accordingly, we recommend removing responsibility for SMR program duties from field chaplains and centralizing it within the CSB to include the primary responsibility for researching and answering field chaplaincy inquiries and to gain greater awareness of issues facing field chaplains. Centralization of this program will also ensure consistency and timeliness of responses and allow field chaplains to more effectively manage their institution's religious services program by focusing on mission critical responsibilities like monitoring religious services and controlling chaplaincy services spaces.

Further, while contract and volunteer faith providers can partially assist the BOP in meeting religious needs when chaplains are not available, the practice is a stopgap and does not address the conditions that have created the chronic staff shortages within the BOP's chaplaincy services departments. This increases the likelihood that institutions will rely on undesirable alternatives, such as inmate-led services, with the accompanying risks associated with them. We believe the BOP can leverage existing technologies which present little or no risk as better alternatives to these current undesirable practices. In so doing, the BOP can encourage institutions to better coordinate and share religious resources throughout the BOP. For example, the BOP has piloted video calls as an alternative to in-person visits and traditional phone calls. We believe the BOP could consider using this technology as a method for streaming live services to institutions experiencing chaplaincy shortages. A BOP-wide calendar of services coupled with relatively inexpensive technological advances in videoconferencing could significantly fill voids that result from chaplaincy shortages and diversity challenges.

During our audit, we asked BOP staff members about potential alternatives to allowing inmate to lead services, and some chaplains agreed that live video streaming of weekly religious services and religious programming is a viable alternative to in-person services that has not been deployed. Further, although field work for this audit was completed before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we note here that utilizing these kinds of technologies may help the BOP minimize large gatherings and provide an alternative choice to inmates who may wish to avoid larger gatherings for health and other reasons. We recommend that the BOP leverage existing resources and explore potential enhancements and additional technological solutions for providing religious services, such as live streams, as an alternative to riskier options such as

inmate-led services, which require stricter monitoring, and to enable greater diversity in the denomination for which services can be provided to a broader population of inmate.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

We believe the BOP must take immediate steps to address its persistent chaplaincy shortages and lack of diversity among the religious affiliations represented within its chaplaincy services program. The BOP's lack of adequate chaplaincy resources and religious diversity among its existing chaplain staff has led to a reliance on inmates and contract and minimally screened volunteer faith providers to lead or otherwise provide religious services. We believe over reliance on individuals outside of the chaplaincy, including inmates, likely creates an unacceptable level of risk, especially when individuals incarcerated for terrorism-related crimes and other high-risk inmates lead religious services. Several BOP staff members expressed significant concern that these inmates could use religious leadership as a platform to radicalize other inmates or to elevate their status and power among the broader inmate population. As a result, it is essential that the BOP aggressively seek alternatives to the practice of inmate-led services while making additional efforts to strategically expand the diversity of its chaplaincy and fill staffing shortages. These staffing shortages exacerbate the risk of inmate-led services and reliance on external providers because monitoring requirements performed by chaplaincy services staff cannot reasonably be met. In addition to the risk of inmate-led services, the chaplaincy staff shortages and diversity challenges also effect the BOP's ability to adequately secure its chaplaincy services spaces, such as faith group lockers and chapel libraries.

To achieve more faith diversity among chaplaincy and to bolster its ranks, we believe the BOP should strategically reassess its strict educational requirements, maximum age restrictions and better utilize existing programs such as its Chaplain Trainee Program to address chaplaincy shortages nationwide. Furthermore, the BOP can alleviate the burden placed on field chaplains by centralizing programs, like the Subject Matter Resource program, by shifting responsibilities to CSB staff. Doing so will not only help provide consistent guidance to field chaplains who need assistance in providing pastoral care to inmates outside of their own faith traditions, but it will also allow field chaplains to focus more on mission critical functions such as monitoring services, securing religious spaces, and overseeing the activities of external providers. The BOP should also consider a more active role for the CSB in the establishment of working relationships with national, regional, and local religious organizations which we believe can help expand the ranks of credible external providers by encouraging their local membership to work with BOP institutions in their geographic areas. Finally, we believe the BOP already has in place technological capabilities that could be utilized to live stream religious services programming to institutions throughout the nation, which we believe could serve as a viable alternative to riskier options currently being relied upon, such as inmate-led services.

We recommend that the BOP:

1. Take steps to address its persistent chaplaincy shortages and lack of diversity of religious affiliations represented within the BOP's chaplaincy by:
  - a. Reassessing the existing education requirement for chaplaincy eligibility to enhance the prospect of attaining the BOP's target chaplain staffing level, or evaluate the benefits of implementing religion-specific educational requirements to account for differing requirements among religions;
  - b. Reconsidering its age restriction for chaplains and coordinate with the Department of Justice

to determine if age waivers should be expanded to a broader group of chaplaincy applicants;  
and

- c. Reviewing the current Chaplain Trainee Program model to expand opportunities for current BOP staff and qualified external applicants with flexibilities that would avoid disqualifying otherwise suitable candidates due to restrictive educational barriers or pastoral experience requirements.
2. Address the security weaknesses that result from its understaffed, overburdened, and diversity-challenged chaplaincy by:
    - a. Strengthening existing policy to include clear guidance about when inmates may be permitted to lead religious services, which inmates should be prohibited from leading services, and minimum monitoring requirements for religious programs or services led by inmates;
    - b. Determining the institutions without remote audio and video monitoring equipment in spaces where religious services are conducted and determine the feasibility of installing such equipment, or if the BOP is unable to install monitoring equipment at these facilities, it should take steps to ensure adequate monitoring is performed;
    - c. Reexamine its practice of prohibiting recording audio and video feeds from chaplaincy services spaces alongside relevant federal law and regulations to help ensure that religious services are monitored to the greatest extent possible and are not misused by some inmates to engage in prohibited conduct; and
    - d. Ensuring that established security procedures regarding faith group lockers are followed and that the BOP policy includes clear procedures for inmate access.
  3. Ensure safe and robust chapel libraries throughout the BOP by:
    - a. Performing a comprehensive review of the Chapel Library Database (CLD) at the CSB to strengthen existing policy or develop new policy that ensures an accurate inventory and timely review of newly introduced English and foreign language texts with suitability determinations that can more easily be shared among all BOP institutions;
    - b. Providing resources to assist chaplains in evaluating existing library materials, including foreign language media, that have not been previously reviewed and entered into the CLD to better ensure that those titles are added to the CLD or its replacement (if applicable); and
    - c. Developing a centralized repository for BOP Chaplaincy Services related advisories to better ensure that important guidance for chaplains is current and consistent and provide chaplains with clear instructions for proper handling and disposal of religious texts deemed inappropriate for inmate use.

4. Improve its oversight of its minimally vetted chaplaincy services volunteers to better address the risk of inappropriate contact with inmates and to prevent rehiring of volunteers who were previously found to violate BOP policy by:
  - a. Conducting a periodic analysis of volunteer contact information through its TRUVIEW system and clearly document any exception that was granted to specific volunteers, such as those in mentoring and transitional programs;
  - b. Ensuring its volunteers and inmates are aware of its policy on prohibited contact and apply increased scrutiny to endorsements offered by previously disciplined volunteers; and
  - c. Ensuring that NAVS volunteer data profiles are accurate, complete, updated, and contain all necessary information so that volunteers terminated for violating BOP policy cannot seek volunteer roles at other BOP institutions.
  
5. Take steps to better support existing chaplaincy services staff and enable them to focus on their primary function of providing spiritual guidance by:
  - a. Requiring the CSB to develop a strategy to strengthen its viable volunteer ranks by establishing relationships with local, regional, and national religious organizations that can assist in providing guidance and information to their members on volunteering at BOP institutions at the community level;
  - b. Developing a sustainable strategy to mitigate staffing shortages caused by chaplaincy absences due to anticipatable periods of extended leave, such as military leave;
  - c. Removing responsibility for SMR program duties from field chaplains and centralizing it within the CSB to include the primary responsibility for researching and answering field chaplaincy inquires and to gain greater awareness of issues facing field chaplains; and
  - d. Leveraging existing resources and exploring potential enhancements and additional technological solutions for providing religious services, such as live streams, as an alternative to riskier options such as inmate-led services, which require stricter monitoring, and to enable greater diversity in the denominations for which services can be provided to a broader population of inmates.

# APPENDIX 1: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

## Objectives

The objective of our audit was to assess the BOP's management and oversight of its religious services program to support faith-based activities and its effectiveness in preventing security risks and misuse of program resources.

## Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we performed audit work at branches of the BOP responsible for implementation and oversight of the BOP's chaplaincy and religious services programs, including the BOP's Central Office, Southeastern Regional Office, and federal correctional institutions. The scope of our audit generally covers activities in the time period between October 2013 to March 2020 in the Chaplaincy Services departments of the 122 BOP institutions, including chapel spaces, such as libraries, storage rooms, and classrooms, as well as chaplains and contract and volunteer faith providers.

During the audit, we interviewed more than 70 BOP personnel, including officials from the BOP's Central Office Chaplaincy Services Branch (CSB), the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia, and 12 individual facilities of varying security levels. While at these facilities we observed religious services and other religious programming, as well as chaplaincy spaces, such as libraries, storage rooms, and assigned faith lockers. At the institutions and CSB, we viewed the chaplaincy's digital records of the Chapel Library Database, as well as the TRUIVIEW and NAVS databases. We also reviewed a sample of volunteer faith provider files to test whether BOP guidelines were met along with applicable BOP program statements, and procedures. Lastly, we utilized evidence related to the BOP's chaplaincy services program gathered during the OIG's recent *Audit of the BOP's Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization*.<sup>36</sup>

## Statement on Compliance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS). Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

## Internal Controls

In this audit, we performed testing of internal controls significant within the context of our audit objectives. We did not evaluate the internal controls of the BOP to provide assurance on its internal control structure as a whole. The BOP's management is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of internal controls in accordance with the BOP's program statements and other procedural documentation. Because we do

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<sup>36</sup> U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG), *Audit of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization*, Audit Report 20-042 (March 2020), <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/a20042.pdf>.

not express an opinion on the BOP's internal control structure as a whole, we offer this statement solely for the information and use of the BOP.<sup>37</sup>

As noted in the Audit Results section of this report, we identified deficiencies in the BOP's internal controls that are significant within the context of the audit objectives and based upon the audit work performed that we believe adversely affect the BOP's ability to satisfy the objectives of its religious services programs while also protecting the safety and security of BOP institutions, staff, and the communities in which they are located.

## Compliance with Laws and Regulations

In this audit we also tested, as appropriate given our audit objective and scope, select transactions, records, procedures, and practices, to obtain reasonable assurance that the BOP complied with federal laws and regulations for which noncompliance, in our judgment, could have a material effect on the results of our audit. Our audit included examining, on a test basis, the BOP's compliance with the following laws and regulations that could have a material effect on the BOP's operations:

- 28 C.F.R. § 548
- 28 C.F.R. § 540.71
- Religious Freedom Restoration Act (42 USC § 2000-bb) (1993)
- Second Chance Act, Pub. Law 110-199, sec. 214 (2007)

This testing included interviewing auditee personnel, observing processes, and assessing internal control procedures. However, nothing came to our attention that caused us to believe that the BOP was not in compliance with the aforementioned laws and regulations.

## Sample-based Testing

To accomplish our audit objective, we performed sample-based testing regarding volunteer faith provider profile information and the CSB's Chapel Library Database. In this effort, we employed a judgmental sampling design to obtain broad exposure to numerous facets of the areas we reviewed. This nonstatistical sample design did not allow projection of the test results to the universe from which the samples were selected.

## Computer-Processed Data

During our audit, we obtained information from TRUFONE, TRULINCS, TRUFACS, the BOP's Web Visiting System, and the Volunteer and Contractor Information (VCI) and National Automated Volunteer System (NAVS). We did not test the reliability of those systems as a whole, therefore any findings identified involving information from those systems were verified with documentation from other sources.

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<sup>37</sup> This restriction is not intended to limit the distribution of this report, which is a matter of public record.

## APPENDIX 2: BOP Correctional Facilities Reviewed or Visited

### BOP Correctional Facilities Selected for Review

BOP Institution	Security Level	Location
<i>Federal Correctional Complex Coleman</i>		Sumterville, FL
Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Coleman	Low	
FCI Coleman	Medium	
United States Penitentiary (UPS) Coleman I	High	
UPS Coleman II	High	
<i>Federal Correctional Complex Florence</i>		Florence, CO
FCI Florence	Medium	
USP Florence	High	
USP Florence ADMAX	Maximum	
FCI Miami	Low	Miami, FL
Federal Detention Center Miami	Mixed	Miami, FL
FCI Pekin	Medium	Pekin, IL
FCI Talladega	Low	Talladega, AL
USP Marion	High	Marion, IL

### BOP Correctional Facilities Visited During Prior Review<sup>38</sup>

BOP Institution	Security Level	Location
<i>Federal Correctional Complex Terre Haute</i>		Terre Haute, IN
FCI Terre Haute	Medium	
USP Terre Haute	High	
FCI Dublin	Low	Dublin, CA

<sup>38</sup> These locations were visited during our prior audit of the BOP's Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization. U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG), *Audit of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Monitoring of Inmate Communications to Prevent Radicalization*, Audit Report 20-042 (March 2020), <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/a20042.pdf>. Only sites from which we have utilized evidence to support our audit findings related to this report are included.

Cont'd

Metropolitan Detention Center Brooklyn	Mixed	Brooklyn, NY
Metropolitan Corrections Center New York	Mixed	New York City, NY

# APPENDIX 3: The BOP's Response to the Draft Audit Report



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Prisons

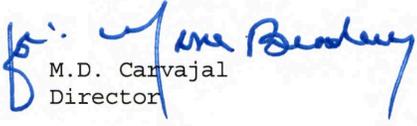
Office of the Director

Washington, DC 20534

May 28, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR JASON R. MALMSTROM  
ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL  
AUDIT

FROM:

  
M.D. Carvajal  
Director

SUBJECT: Response to the Office of Inspector General's (OIG)  
Draft Report: Audit of the Federal Bureau of  
Prisons' Management and Oversight of its Chaplaincy  
Program

The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) appreciates the opportunity to provide a formal response to the Office of the Inspector General's above referenced report. The BOP has completed our review of the report and agrees with all recommendations. We offer the following comments regarding the recommendations.

**Recommendation One:** Take steps to address its persistent chaplaincy shortages and lack of diversity of religious affiliations represented within BOP's chaplaincy by:

- a. Reassessing the existing education requirement for chaplaincy eligibility to enhance the prospect of attaining BOP's target chaplain staffing level, or evaluate the benefits of implementing religion-specific educational requirements to account for differing requirements among religions;

**BOP's Response:** Because BOP chaplains lead out of their own faith tradition and are responsible for ensuring religious accommodations across all religious lines, agency chaplains require a graduate level theological degree that includes interfaith study as outlined in current policy. The agency will however revise its policy to address religious diversity chaplaincy hiring needs and enhance the prospect of attaining BOP's target chaplain staffing level. The draft

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policy will be presented to the National Union by the end of FY21.

- b. Reconsidering its age restriction for and coordinate with the Department of Justice to determine if age waivers should be expanded to a wider group of chaplaincy applicants; and

**BOP's Response:** To improve the representation of non-Protestant faith groups, the agency will coordinate with the DOJ on wider age waivers for specific faith groups of chaplains to best meet inmate diversity religious needs. The BOP will forward such a request to DOJ for their review and determination by the end of FY21.

- c. Reviewing the current Chaplain Trainee Program model to expand opportunities for current BOP staff and qualified external applicants with flexibilities that would avoid disqualifying otherwise suitable candidates due to restrictive educational barriers or pastoral experience requirements.

**BOP's Response:** BOP policy will be updated to allow for chaplain trainee hiring flexibility. The draft policy will be presented to the National Union by the end of FY21.

**Recommendation Two:** Address the security weaknesses that result from its understaffed, overburdened, and diversity-challenged chaplaincy by:

- a. Strengthening existing policy to include clear guidance about when inmates may be permitted to lead religious services, which inmates should be prohibited from leading services, and minimum monitoring requirements for religious programs or services led by inmates;

**BOP's Response:** The BOP will revise the policy guidance regarding inmate-led religious services, chapel monitoring branch procedures, and national chaplaincy training content. The draft policy will be presented to the National Union by the end of FY21.

- b. Determining the institutions without remote audio and video monitoring equipment in spaces where religious services are conducted and determine the feasibility of installing such equipment, or if BOP is unable to install monitoring

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equipment at these facilities, it should take steps to ensure adequate monitoring is performed;

**BOP's Response:** As a result of the 2016 OIG Contraband Interdiction Audit (OIG 16-05), the BOP conducted a survey of all field site camera systems and developed a plan to address gaps in surveillance systems. The BOP subsequently developed an acquisition plan to replace and/or update systems where blind spots and additional cameras were needed. Seventy-two camera systems were identified and funded for replacement/upgrade. The BOP will review the survey to identify sites which specified gaps in the areas of religious services and modify the upgrade plan where necessary to address this recommendation. The review and update of the survey will be completed by the end of 1QFY22 (December 31, 2021). Note, this recommendation also relates to the recommendation below requiring legal analysis of the BOP's visual/auditory monitoring of religious services.

- c. Reexamining its practice of prohibiting recording audio and video feeds from chaplaincy services spaces alongside relevant laws and regulations to ensure that religious services are monitored to the greatest extent possible and are not misused by some inmates to engage in prohibited conduct; and

**BOP's Response:** The BOP's Office of General Counsel will reexamine recording audio and video feeds in chapel services spaces in light of relevant laws and regulations with the anticipated completion of this review by the end of FY21. If additional surveillance is determined permissible and appropriate, the BOP will prioritize and work towards resolving needed chaplaincy and support staff positions to monitor existing chapel programming and chapel monitoring equipment by incorporating additional staff into the FSA spend plan.

- d. Ensuring that established security procedures regarding faith group lockers are followed and that BOP policy includes clear procedures for inmate access.

**BOP's Response:** The BOP will provide updated guidance and remind field sites on the security procedures relating to faith group lockers and inmate access by the end of FY21.

**Recommendation Three:** Ensure safe and robust chapel libraries throughout BOP by:

- 
- a. Performing a comprehensive review of the Chapel Library Database (CLD) at the CSB to strengthen existing policy or develop new policy that ensures an accurate inventory and timely review of newly introduced English and foreign language texts with suitability determinations that can more easily be shared among all BOP institutions;

**BOP's Response:** The BOP will perform a comprehensive review of the CLD to affirm compliance with policy as it relates to the timely review of chapel materials in English and other languages by the end of FY21. If additional changes to the CLD or refresher training is required, BOP will implement such training and/or changes by the end of 2QFY22 (March 31, 2022).

- b. Providing resources to assist chaplains in evaluating existing library materials, including foreign language media, that have not been previously reviewed and entered into the CLD to better ensure that those titles are added to the CLD or its replacement (if applicable); and

**BOP's Response:** As part of its review of the CLD, BOP will identify those foreign language materials requiring translation and make them available to the CTU for translation and affirmance as to content and to identify any potential security threats. This review will be completed by the end of 1QFY22 (December 31, 2021) and the translation is expected to be completed by the end of March in FY22.

- c. Developing a centralized repository for BOP Chaplaincy Services related advisories to better ensure that important guidance for chaplains is current and consistent and provide chaplains with clear instructions for proper handling and disposal of religious texts deemed inappropriate for inmate use.

**BOP's Response:** The BOP will develop a centralized repository for BOP Chaplaincy Services related advisories by the end of FY21 to better ensure that important guidance for chaplains is current and consistent and provide chaplains with clear instructions for proper handling and disposal of religious texts deemed inappropriate for inmate use.

**Recommendation Four:** Improve its oversight of its minimally vetted chaplaincy services volunteers to better address the risk of inappropriate contact with inmates and to prevent rehiring of volunteers who were previously found to violate BOP policy by:

- a. Conducting a periodic analysis of volunteer contact information through its TRUVIEW system and clearly document any exception that was granted to specific volunteers, such as those in mentoring and transitional programs;

**BOP's Response:** The BOP is developing an improved volunteer database that will allow us to better review and analyze volunteer information. This new database includes volunteer identifiers including those in mentoring and transitional programs and unauthorized volunteers. The first phase of the new system is anticipated for roll-out by the end of FY21. We anticipate this system will be fully deployed by the end of FY22.

- b. Ensuring its volunteers and inmates are aware of its policy on prohibited contact and apply increased scrutiny to endorsements offered by previously disciplined volunteers; and

**BOP's Response:** Prohibited contact with inmates and procedures for volunteers to be discontinued from volunteering is covered in the existing BOP Volunteer Services policy. This policy guidance will be reinforced in divisional/branch communication, staff and volunteer training materials, and on the public website by the end of FY21.

- c. Ensuring that NAVS volunteer data profiles are accurate, complete, updated, and contain all necessary information so that volunteers terminated for violating BOP policy cannot seek volunteer roles at other BOP institutions.

**BOP's Response:** The agency is developing an improved volunteer database, with the first phase anticipated roll out by the end of FY21. This database will ensure volunteer data profiles are accurate, complete, updated, and contain all necessary information so that volunteers terminated for violating BOP policy cannot seek volunteer roles in other BOP institutions. In the interim, an analysis of volunteer profiles will be conducted to verify that volunteers terminated for violating BOP policy are prohibited. This review will be completed by the end of 1QFY22 (December 31, 2021).

**Recommendation Five:** Take steps to better support existing chaplaincy services staff and enable them to focus on their primary function of providing spiritual guidance by:

- a. Requiring the CSB to develop a strategy to strengthen its viable volunteer ranks by establishing relationships with local, regional, and national religious organizations that can assist in providing guidance and information to their members on volunteering at BOP institutions at the community level;

**BOP's Response:** The CSB will build upon existing partnerships and establish new partnerships with local, regional, and national religious organizations to strengthen current and future chapel volunteering. An update of these new partnerships will be provided at the end of FY21.

- b. Developing a sustainable strategy to mitigate staffing shortages caused by chaplaincy absences due to anticipatable periods of extended leave, such as military leave;

**BOP's Response:** Within the FSA spending plan, the BOP will prioritize needed chaplaincy and support staff positions to monitor existing chapel programming and new programming to counter-balance inmate radicalization.

- c. Removing the SMR duties from field chaplains and centralizing it within the CSB to include the primary responsibility for researching and answering field chaplaincy inquires and to gain greater awareness of issues facing field chaplains; and

**BOP's Response:** The SMR duties will be merged with the centralized CSB Religious Issues Committee process by the end of FY21.

- d. Leveraging existing resources and exploring potential enhancements and additional technological solutions for providing religious services, such as live streams, as an alternative to riskier options such as inmate-led services, which require stricter monitoring, and to enable greater diversity in the denominations for which services can be provided to a broader population of inmates.

**BOP's Response:** The Bureau plans to purchase 125 field chapel VTCs to expand access to viable religious resources and

programming in real-time and via web-conferencing recording.  
The purchase is anticipated to be completed by the end of FY21.  
The anticipated installation date for these chapel VTC endpoints  
is the end of 2QFY22, assuming no infrastructure changes (new  
conduit, etc.) is required.

## **APPENDIX 4: Office of the Inspector General Analysis and Summary of Actions Necessary to Close the Audit Report**

The OIG provided a draft of this audit report to the BOP. The BOP's response is incorporated in Appendix 3 of this final report. In response to our audit report, the BOP agreed with our recommendations and discussed the actions it will implement in response to our findings. As a result, the status of the audit report is resolved. The following provides the OIG analysis of the response and summary of actions necessary to close the report.

### **Recommendations for the BOP:**

- 1. Take steps to address its persistent chaplaincy shortages and lack of diversity of religious affiliations represented within the BOP's chaplaincy by:**
  - a. Reassessing the existing education requirement for chaplaincy eligibility to enhance the prospect of attaining the BOP's target chaplain staffing level, or evaluate the benefits of implementing religion-specific educational requirements to account for differing requirements among religions;**
  - b. Reconsidering its age restriction for chaplains and coordinate with the Department of Justice to determine if age waivers should be expanded to a broader group of chaplaincy applicants; and**
  - c. Reviewing the current Chaplain Trainee Program model to expand opportunities for current BOP staff and qualified external applicants with flexibilities that would avoid disqualifying otherwise suitable candidates due to restrictive educational barriers or pastoral experience requirements.**

Resolved. The BOP agreed with our recommendation. The BOP stated in its response that it would revise its policy to address religious diversity chaplaincy hiring needs and enhance the prospect of attaining the BOP's target chaplaincy staffing level and present the policy to the National Union by the end of FY 2021. Further, the BOP also stated that it will coordinate with the DOJ on wider age waivers for specific faith groups of chaplains to best meet inmate diversity religious needs and will forward the request to the DOJ for their review and determination by the end of FY 2021. Additionally, the BOP stated that it would also update policy to allow for chaplain trainee hiring flexibility and will present the draft policy to the National Union by the end of FY 2021.

As a result, this recommendation is resolved. This recommendation can be closed when we receive evidence that the BOP has reassessed existing educational requirements for chaplaincy or evaluated the benefit of implementing religion-specific educational requirements to account for differing requirements among religions, worked with the DOJ to coordinate the wider use of age waivers in the hiring of chaplaincy for a greater number of faiths, and updated its Chaplaincy Trainee Program policy to allow for greater hiring flexibility.

2. Address the security weaknesses that result from its understaffed, overburdened, and diversity-challenged chaplaincy by:
  - a. Strengthening existing policy to include clear guidance about when inmates may be permitted to lead religious services, which inmates should be prohibited from leading services, and minimum monitoring requirements for religious programs or services led by inmates;
  - b. Determining the institutions without remote audio and video monitoring equipment in spaces where religious services are conducted and determine the feasibility of installing such equipment, or if the BOP is unable to install monitoring equipment at these facilities, it should take steps to ensure adequate monitoring is performed;
  - c. Reexamine its practice of prohibiting recording audio and video feeds from chaplaincy services spaces alongside relevant federal law and regulations to help ensure that religious services are monitored to the greatest extent possible and are not misused by some inmates to engage in prohibited conduct; and
  - d. Ensuring that established security procedures regarding faith group lockers are followed and that the BOP policy includes clear procedures for inmate access.

Resolved. The BOP agreed with our recommendation. The BOP stated in its response that it will revise the policy guidance regarding inmate-led religious services, chapel monitoring branch procedures, and national chaplaincy training content, and present a draft policy to the National Union by the end of FY 2021. The BOP also stated it will review information previously obtained through a survey of field site camera systems and an associated acquisition plan to identify sites which specified gaps in the area of religious services and modify upgrade plans were necessary to address the recommendation. The BOP expects the review to be completed by the end of FY 2021.

Furthermore, the BOP stated that the BOP's Office of General Counsel will reexamine recording audio and video feeds in chapel services spaces in light of relevant laws and regulations with the anticipated completion of the review by the end of FY 2021. Further, the BOP stated that if appropriate it will prioritize and work towards resolving needed chaplaincy and support staff positions to monitor existing chapel programming and chapel monitoring equipment by incorporating additional staff into the FSA spend plan. Finally, the BOP indicated that it would provide updated guidance and remind field sites on security procedures relating to faith group lockers are followed and that BOP policy includes clear procedures for inmate access.

As a result, this recommendation is resolved. This recommendation can be closed when we receive evidence that the BOP has strengthened its existing policy to include clear guidance about when inmates may be permitted to lead religious services, which inmates should be prohibited from leading services, and minimum monitoring requirements for religious programs or services led by inmates. We must also receive evidence that the BOP determined which institutions are without remote audio and video monitoring equipment in spaces where religious services are conducted, accessed the feasibility of installing such equipment, and taken steps to ensure adequate

monitoring occurs in locations when monitoring equipment cannot be installed; and reexamined its practice of prohibiting recording audio and video feeds from chaplaincy services spaces alongside relevant federal law and regulations to help ensure that religious services are monitored to the greatest extent possible and are not misused by some inmates to engage in prohibited conduct. Finally, we must receive evidence that the BOP ensured that established security procedures regarding faith group lockers are followed and that the BOP policy includes clear procedures for inmate access.

**3. Ensure safe and robust chapel libraries throughout the BOP by:**

- a. Performing a comprehensive review of the Chapel Library Database (CLD) at the CSB to strengthen existing policy or develop new policy that ensures an accurate inventory and timely review of newly introduced English and foreign language texts with suitability determinations that can more easily be shared among all BOP institutions;**
- b. Providing resources to assist chaplains in evaluating existing library materials, including foreign language media, that have not been previously reviewed and entered into the CLD to better ensure that those titles are added to the CLD or its replacement (if applicable); and**
- c. Developing a centralized repository for BOP Chaplaincy Services related advisories to better ensure that important guidance for chaplains is current and consistent and provide chaplains with clear instructions for proper handling and disposal of religious texts deemed inappropriate for inmate use.**

Resolved. The BOP agreed with our recommendation. The BOP stated in its response that it will perform a comprehensive review of the CLD and strengthen existing policy or develop new policy to ensure accurate inventory and timely review of new texts for English and other languages with suitability determinations that can be shared among all BOP institutions. The BOP also indicated that it would identify foreign language materials in its inventory that require translation and submit those materials to CTU for translation and affirmance as to their content by the end of March in FY 2022. Additionally, the BOP stated that it would develop a centralized repository for advisories related to BOP Chaplaincy Services and the policy will contain guidance for proper handling and disposal of religious texts by the end of FY 2021.

As a result, this recommendation is resolved. This recommendation can be closed when we receive evidence of a comprehensive review of the CLD, strengthened existing policy or new policy that ensures accurate inventory and timely review of new texts with suitability determinations that can be shared at all BOP institutions; documentation of a review of existing foreign language materials requiring translation and evidence of their translation and affirmance of their content, and; evidence of a centralized repository with advisories related to BOP Chaplaincy Services, including guidance with clear instructions for proper handling and disposal of religious texts.

4. **Improve its oversight of its minimally vetted chaplaincy services volunteers to better address the risk of inappropriate contact with inmates and to prevent rehiring of volunteers who were previously found to violate BOP policy by:**
  - a. **Conducting a periodic analysis of volunteer contact information through its TRUVIEW system and clearly document any exception that was granted to specific volunteers, such as those in mentoring and transitional programs;**
  - b. **Ensuring its volunteers and inmates are aware of its policy on prohibited contact and apply increased scrutiny to endorsements offered by previously disciplined volunteers; and**
  - c. **Ensuring that NAVS volunteer data profiles are accurate, complete, updated, and contain all necessary information so that volunteers terminated for violating BOP policy cannot seek volunteer roles at other BOP institutions.**

Resolved. The BOP agreed with our recommendation. The BOP stated in its response that it will conduct a periodic analysis of volunteer contact through its TRUVIEW system and clearly document exceptions granted to volunteers. It will also reinforce its existing BOP Volunteer Services policy in divisional/branch communication, staff and volunteer training materials, and on its public website by the end of FY 2021. The BOP will also develop an improved volunteer database which will ensure that volunteer data profiles are accurate, complete, updated, and contain all necessary information to prevent terminated volunteers from volunteering in other BOP institutions. The new database will be release in phases, with the first phase starting by the end of FY 2021. In the interim, the BOP will conduct an analysis of volunteer profiled to verify that terminated volunteers are prohibited from volunteering in BOP institutions.

As a result, this recommendation is resolved. This recommendation can be closed when we receive documentation of the BOP's periodic analysis of volunteer contact in the TRUVIEW system and supporting documentation for any communications exceptions granted to volunteers; evidence or documentation of the BOP's reinforcement of its Volunteer Services policy through regional/branch communication, staff and volunteer training materials, and on its public website, and; evidence that the improved volunteer database includes accurate, complete, updated volunteer data profiles and contain all necessary information to prevent terminated volunteers from volunteering in other BOP institutions as well as evidence of an analysis of volunteer profiles conducted prior to the database's roll out.

5. **Take steps to better support existing chaplaincy services staff and enable them to focus on their primary function of providing spiritual guidance by:**
  - a. **Requiring the CSB to develop a strategy to strengthen its viable volunteer ranks by establishing relationships with local, regional, and national religious organizations that can assist in providing guidance and information to their members on volunteering at BOP institutions at the community level;**

- b. Developing a sustainable strategy to mitigate staffing shortages caused by chaplaincy absences due to anticipatable periods of extended leave, such as military leave;
- c. Removing responsibility for SMR program duties from field chaplains and centralizing it within the CSB to include the primary responsibility for researching and answering field chaplaincy inquires and to gain greater awareness of issues facing field chaplains; and
- d. Leveraging existing resources and exploring potential enhancements and additional technological solutions for providing religious services, such as live streams, as an alternative to riskier options such as inmate-led services, which require stricter monitoring, and to enable greater diversity in the denominations for which services can be provided to a broader population of inmates.

Resolved. The BOP agreed with our recommendation. The BOP stated in its response that it will require the CSB to develop a strategy to establish and strengthen relationships with local, regional, and national religious organizations, by the end of FY 2021. The BOP will also develop a sustainable strategy to mitigate staffing shortages caused by chaplaincy absences due to extended periods of leave. The BOP also stated that it will merge SMR duties with the CSB Religious Issues Committee by the end of FY 2021. Finally, the BOP states that it will purchase and install 125 field chapel Video Telephone Conferencing to provide religious programming and resources, both in real-time and recorded, by the end of the second quarter of FY 2022.

As a result, this recommendation is resolved. This recommendation can be closed when we receive evidence that the BOP has developed a strategy to strengthen its viable volunteer ranks by establishing relationships with local, regional, and national religious organizations to assist in providing guidance and information to their members on volunteering at BOP institutions at the community level; developed a sustainable strategy to mitigate staffing shortages caused by chaplaincy absences due to extended leave; removed responsibility for SMR program duties from field chaplains and centralized SMR duties to the CSB; and purchased and installed Video Telephone Conferencing in field chapels to use for programming and resource access, as applicable.