

April [DAY], 2013

[DIRECTOR OF FACILITY]
[STREET ADDRESS 1]
[STREET ADDRESS 2]
[CITY, STATE, AND ZIP CODE]

Dear [DIRECTOR'S NAME]:

With this letter I would like to confirm that you are aware that in early July, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and its data collection agent RTI International plan to begin work on a pilot study for one of BJS's major surveys, the Survey of Prison Inmates (or SPI). I have already contacted [COMMISSIONER/SECRETARY NAME] to obtain approval to conduct the pilot study in two state facilities in [STATE] and, as you may already be aware, your facility was selected [BY COMMISSIONER/SECRETARY IF APPLICABLE]. This letter is intended to provide you with some information about the SPI and the pilot study so you understand the goals and what they entail.

By way of background, since 1974, BJS has conducted six prior versions of its SPI survey, or about one every 6 or 7 years, with the last one having been conducted in 2004. BJS uses the SPI to generate national-level estimates of the characteristics of the prison population, including characteristics that are germane to corrections management such as the severity of offenses committed and criminal history; medical, mental health, and substance abuse and dependency problems; behaviors in prison including both rule infractions and participation in programs.

The main purposes of the pilot study are to give BJS a chance to evaluate the questionnaire and interviewing procedures for the SPI. To conduct the evaluation, we need two forms of assistance from you: (1) a roster of inmates from which we can draw a sample of about 80 inmates to interview; and (2) assistance to the RTI staff in managing logistics associated with conducting the interviews. To conduct the interviews, RTI staff would need access to areas that are secure but out of hearing range of staff and this is because as a federal statistical agency, BJS pledges confidentiality to the interviewed inmates.

We aim to minimize disruption to your facility. We expect that RTI will have between 4 and 8 trained interviewers on site for three days, depending on the availability of space in your facility. While this may sound like a large number, RTI staff have extensive experience in conducting BJS surveys in prison facilities and their staff will follow all institution rules and adjust their schedules to minimize any potential disruption to facility operations.

I greatly appreciate your helping BJS to conduct this pilot study, and at the same time, I want to make sure that you have as much information as you need about the pilot study. To that end, if you would like to schedule a telephone call with me or my staff within the next two weeks to talk about the survey, please let me know. (My contact information follows.)

If on the other hand, you are comfortable with proceeding at this point then I ask that you provide me with the name and contact information of the staff member at your facility who can work directly with RTI's logistics manager to begin planning for the pilot study. RTI's logistics manager will plan to contact that staff member within the [WHEN].

For any of these matters, you can contact me via email at William.Sabol@usdoj.gov or by phone at (202) 514-1062. Or, you may contact the chief of BJS's Corrections Statistics Program, Daniela, at Daniela.Golinelli@usdoj.gov or (202) 616-5164 and let her know.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

William J. Sabol, Ph.D., Acting Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics

cc: Daniela Golinelli, Ph.D., Bureau of Justice Statistics
Chief, Corrections Statistics Program

Lauren Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics
Statistician and SPI Project Manager, Corrections Statistics Program