

DOJ Letterhead

[Date]  
[Name][Title]  
[Office]  
[Address]  
[City, ST Zip]

Dear Director [Name]:

I am writing to ask for your assistance with the fourth National Inmate Survey (NIS-4). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is mandated by the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA—P.L. 108-79) to carry out a comprehensive statistical analysis and report on the prevalence and nature of sexual victimization within adult correctional facilities.

BJS is required by Congress to conduct a survey of no less than 10% of all prisons. From this sample, we will publish national and facility-level estimates of sexual-victimization rates and the circumstances surrounding such victimization in prisons. We will also publish rankings of the facilities with the highest rates and the lowest rates of sexual victimization.

The corrections field has witnessed many changes related to sexual victimization since the NIS was last conducted in 2011 and 2012, most notably the adoption of the PREA national standards in 2012. The NIS-4 will allow us to assess the potential impact of these changes.

The previous rounds of the NIS taught us much about sexual victimization in prisons. In the most recent survey, the NIS-3, about 4% of state and federal prison inmates reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization by another inmate or facility staff in the prior 12 months. This new round will allow us to see how that rate has changed. We will repeat the same core questions to enable comparison, and new questions have been added to learn more about the circumstances surrounding inmate-on-inmate victimization and staff sexual misconduct.

The survey will use audio computer-assisted self-interviewing technology in which inmates see the questions on a laptop computer screen, hear the questions through headphones, and select their answers using touchscreen laptops. During the previous NIS collections, we found this methodology to be effective in producing high quality data while protecting the confidentiality of the responses from inmates.

BJS has entered into a cooperative agreement with RTI International (RTI) to collect the data for the NIS. An RTI representative will contact you in [March] to request access to a liaison from your office. RTI will work with the liaison to ascertain whether a state-specific Institutional Review Board (IRB) or research committee approval process is necessary or whether you can accept certification from RTI's IRB.

RTI will invite a representative from the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and each Department of Corrections (DOC) to join a webinar to address more details about this important program. The webinar will be available beginning in May.

The enclosed brochure provides a general overview to the NIS-4. Once we get closer to the fielding of the survey and have obtained the necessary research approvals, RTI will contact you again with a list of sampled facilities in your jurisdiction. RTI will then work with your liaison to plan for and operationalize data collection within your facilities. We will work diligently with facilities to ensure the survey has the smallest practicable impact on operations.

We look forward to working with you and your designated liaison to ensure a successful survey and thank you in advance for your assistance.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact Amy Lauger, Chief of the Institutional Research and Special Projects Unit and PREA Program Manager here at BJS, at [Amy.Lauger@usdoj.gov](mailto:Amy.Lauger@usdoj.gov) or 202-307-0711. Rachel Caspar, the Principal Investigator from RTI, is also available to address questions and comments at [Caspar@rti.org](mailto:Caspar@rti.org) or (919) 541-6376.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson  
Director, Bureau of Justice Statistics