Appendix B – Initial Contact Commissioner Letter

Month XX, 202X

[COMMISSIONER/SECRETARY NAME AND TITLE]
[STREET ADDRESS 1]
[STREET ADDRESS 2]
[CITY, STATE, AND ZIP CODE]

Dear [COMMISSIONER/SECRETARY NAME]:

In 2025, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is planning a field test related to one of its major survey initiatives, the Survey of Prison Inmates (or SPI). I am writing to respectfully request your approval for staff from BJS's data collection agent, RTI International (RTI), to conduct a test in [NAME OF FACILITY/FACILITIES] in [JURISDICTION]. The field test will compare in-person and virtual survey administration methods, focusing on operational aspects and data quality.

The field test, planned for January through May 2025, is critical to assess the potential to reduce burden on facilities and data validity. The results will be used to inform decisions about the design of the national study in the future. The field test would involve two tasks by staff from [NAME OF FACILITY/FACILITIES]: 1) providing a roster of incarcerated adults from which we can draw a random sample of about 100 to interview, and 2) assisting RTI staff in managing logistics associated with conducting the in-person and virtual interviews. The interviews would need to be conducted in a private secure area that is out of hearing range of others to assure confidentiality of the participants.

This collection is authorized under 34 U.S.C. § 10132. Your participation is voluntary. BJS will only use the information for statistical purposes [34 U.S.C. § 10134]. BJS will protect personally identifiable information consistent with the confidentiality requirements in 34 U.S.C. § 10231. See the BJS Data Protection Guidelines.

We aim to minimize disruption to each facility. We expect that RTI will have two to three trained interviewers on site for up to five days and one on-site coordinator to liaise with a facility point of contact and to assist with establishing connections virtual interviewers. RTI staff will follow all institution rules and adjust schedules to minimize any potential disruption to facility operations.

I would appreciate your help in conducting this field test, and I also want to make sure that you have enough information to make an informed decision about whether you will grant my request. If you would like to talk with my staff about the survey, please feel free to contact Emily Buehler, BJS's SPI Project Manager, at Emily.Buehler@usdoj.gov or 202.598.1036.

If you have enough information about the field test, then I ask that you provide me with the name and contact information of someone from your office or [FACILITY NAME] who can assist in arranging the interviews.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Scott, PhD

Acting Director, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Appendix C – Sampled Facility Letter

Month XX, 202X

[FACILITY ADMINISTRATOR NAME AND TITLE]
[STREET ADDRESS 1]
[STREET ADDRESS 2]
[CITY, STATE, AND ZIP CODE]

Dear [FACILITY ADMINISTRATOR NAME]:

With this letter I would like to confirm that you are aware that in winter 2025, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and its data collection agent RTI International (RTI) plan to begin a field test of one of BJS's major surveys, the Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI). I have already contacted [COMMISSIONER/SECRETARY NAME] to obtain approval to conduct the study in [[FACILITY NAME]/[NUMBER OF FACILITIES] state facilities in [STATE] and, as you may already be aware, your facility was selected to participate.

In past iterations of the SPI, data have been collected through in-person interviews with a sample of incarcerated adults. This field test will compare in-person and virtual survey administration methods, focusing on operational aspects and data quality. Each interview, regardless of method used, is estimated to take about 60 minutes on average. To conduct the survey, we request two types of assistance from you: 1) providing a roster of incarcerated adults from which we can draw a random sample of about 100 individuals to interview, and 2) assisting RTI staff in managing logistics associated with conducting the interviews. The interviews would need to be conducted in a private secure area that is out of hearing range of others to assure confidentiality of the participants.

This collection is authorized under 34 U.S.C. § 10132. Your participation is voluntary. BJS will only use the information for statistical purposes [34 U.S.C. § 10134]. BJS will protect personally identifiable information consistent with the confidentiality requirements in 34 U.S.C. § 10231. See the *BJS Data Protection Guidelines*.

We aim to minimize disruption to your facility. We expect that RTI will have between two and three trained interviewers on site for up to five days and one on-site coordinator to liaise with a facility point of contact and to assist with establishing connections virtual interviewers. RTI staff will follow all institutional rules and adjust schedules to minimize any potential disruption to facility operations.

Enclosed with this letter, you will find a FAQ document that provides you with more information about the field test. We would greatly appreciate your help in conducting this important study and thank you in advance for your participation. An RTI representative will contact you soon to discuss the survey and arrangements. If you have any questions about the survey, please feel free to call Hannah Everhart, RTI Data Collection Manager, at hdewar@rti.org or (919) 541-6000.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Scott, PhD

Acting Director, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Survey of Prison Inmates – Research and Development

Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) Document for Correctional Facilities and Staff

What is this all about?

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is conducting a field test for the Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI). BJS uses the survey to generate national estimates of the characteristics of the U.S. prison population, track changes in the characteristics of prisoners over time, conduct studies of prisoners on special topics, and identify policy-relevant changes in the prison population. The results of the field test will be used to inform decisions about the design of the national study in the future.

How will people be selected to participate?

BJS's data collection agent, RTI International (RTI), will randomly select approximately 100 incarcerated adults in the facility to participate in the study and then provide the facility with the names of those selected. Half will be asked to meet with a study interviewer in-person and half will be asked to talk with an interviewer virtually (e.g., using Zoom). Facility staff will be asked to escort each selected adult to areas where the interviews will take place.

What should I say to the incarcerated persons who have been randomly selected to participate?

When approaching those who have been randomly selected to participate in the SPI Field Test, you can adhere to the following script: *"[Insert person's name], our facility is participating in a special research study and one of the researchers would like to invite you to participate in an interview. An interviewer will meet with you [in-person/virtually by phone] and can tell you what it is about. Please come with me so I can introduce you to the interviewer."*

If the person requests more information, you can say: *"I do not know much about the interview, but the person conducting the interview will tell you what it is all about. If you come with me, I will introduce you, but you do not have to come with me or participate in the survey."*

Where will the interview be conducted?

All interviews, whether done in-person or virtually, will be conducted in somewhat private areas or rooms within the facility. Because the interviewers will use laptop computers to administer the interviews and some will be conducted virtually, it would be preferable that the interview area or rooms be equipped with a power outlet and computer capable of connecting to the internet. Several interviewers can use the same interview space if the space or room is large enough to ensure some distance between participants.

What if an incarcerated adult cannot leave their cell or housing unit?

We understand that some individuals may not be able to leave their cells or housing units. However, it is important that we try to give all selected incarcerated persons an opportunity to participate in the study. We would appreciate it if you can work with our research team when they are at your facility to determine if there is a way to include all sampled persons in the SPI.

What does the interview involve?

Participation in the interview is completely voluntary, so incarcerated adults can refuse to participate or to answer any of the questions. First, the participant will be asked a series of questions at the beginning of the interview. Depending on how they respond to these initial questions, they may not qualify to participate in the study. Therefore, some might be excused after only a few minutes while others will qualify for the study and be in the interviewing area or room for about 60 minutes. Participants will be asked about their backgrounds, families, criminal and incarceration histories, pro-social connections, program participation, substance use, mental health, medical problems, and reentry-related needs and plans.

Facility ID Number	State or BOP Number	FBI Fingerprint ID Number	First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Housing Unit
ST123456	98712345	FBI12345	John	Paul	Jones	A-29

Gender	Date of Birth	Race	Ethnicity	Current Prisoin Admission Date	Sentence Length	Offense Type (BOP Facilities Only)
M	1/23/1945	W		1/1/2001	25y	Drug Offense

Survey of Prison Inmates – Research and Development

Consent to Participate in Research

Introduction

The Survey of Prison Inmates – Research and Development Study is a research study being done by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and RTI International. The study will help us learn the best way to interview people who are in prison. For this study, we will interview adults at about 30 prisons and you are one of about 100 randomly selected from this prison. Your participation in this study is voluntary. I will tell you about the study and then you can decide if you want to participate.

Description of the Study

If you agree to participate, I will interview you for about 1 hour. I will ask questions about your criminal history, physical and mental health, your use of drugs and alcohol before you were incarcerated, and any treatment you may have received. I will also ask questions about your experiences at this prison, some questions about your family, your education, and your work history. I will enter your answers directly into a laptop computer. In addition to asking you questions today, information will be collected from your existing criminal records as well as any updates that are made to these records over the next [five/ten] years. This will allow us to do additional research without taking up more of your time with questions. It will also help us find ways to improve the services, education, and training available to incarcerated adults in the future, including those who return to the community.

IF INCENTIVE ALLOWED:

- IF IN-PERSON: To thank you for participating in the study, we will provide you with a snack to eat before you leave this room.
- IF VIRTUAL: To thank you for talking with me about the study, we have provided you with a snack to eat before you leave this room.

Possible Risks

Some of the survey questions are personal and ask about behaviors that may be illegal. These questions may make you feel uncomfortable or upset. You can skip any questions you do not want to answer. I will not ask you questions if I think someone can overhear your answers. You can stop the interview at any time.

Benefits

You will not receive any direct benefits for participating in this study. However, the results of this study may help to inform future research that improves the condition and well-being of adults in facilities across the nation. If you decide not to participate you will not lose any benefits

or services that you now receive or might receive in the future. Whether you participate or not will have no effect on your legal status or any decisions regarding your release from this prison.

Confidentiality

As required by law, Title 42, United States Code, Section 3789g, this study is covered by a Privacy Certificate which means that we will treat everything you say during the interview and all information from your criminal record as private. Any information that could identify you will be held strictly confidential. It also means that nothing you tell me during the interview can be used in any legal action. Your name will not be connected with the information you provide in this interview. We will not share any of the information you provide with anyone at this prison or anyone who is not directly working on the project. There is, however, an exception to our promise of confidentiality. If you tell me that you intend to seriously harm yourself or a specific person, I may need to inform correctional staff.

Do you have any questions about taking part in this study?

Further Questions

If you have any questions about the project, you may write to the Survey of Prison Inmates at RTI International, P.O. Box 12194, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you can write to RTI's Office of Research Protection at the same address.

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the participant.

□ I have read all required informed consent text to this individual.

□ Individual consented to data linkage

□ Individual consented to interview

Person Who Obtained Consent: _____

Interviewer ID Number: _____

Date: _____/_____/_____

Appendix G – Roster Request Instructions

Survey of Prison Inmates – Research and Development

Roster Request

In order to draw a random sample of incarcerated adults and accurately analyze the interview data from each facility, we are asking agencies to provide rosters as described below.

Number of Rosters and When They Are Needed

1. **Example Roster**
   We would appreciate having this roster as soon as possible so that our statisticians can review the format of the roster you provide and determine any steps we need to take in preparation for sampling incarcerated adults for the study. If facilities within the same state DOC are responsible for sending their own rosters, we will need an example roster from each selected facility in that state DOC. Otherwise, we only need one example roster from each state DOC and one from BOP.
2. **Sampling Roster**
   We will need this roster one week before data collection is scheduled to begin in each facility (specific date to be determined after we receive the example roster) so that we can select a random sample.
3. **Confirmation Roster**
   We will need this roster to be run on the morning of the first day of data collection so that we can cross-check it against the Sampling Roster that was provided the week before and used to generate our random sample. This will allow us to determine which persons were released or transferred from the facility between the time the Final Roster was produced and when data collection begins. If it is not possible to run a confirmation roster that accurately reflects the population at the facility when data collection begins, we will need to work with you to develop a way to identify releases and admissions to the facility that occurred between the time when the Sampling Roster was produced, and the time data collection begins.

Content of Rosters

Below is a list of requested data elements for the study. If there is a particular data element that is not available, please let us know.

- **Inmate or Facility ID Number.** This is a number a facility uses to locate sampled adults. It may also be called a DOC number.
- **State/BOP Number**
- **FBI Fingerprint ID Number**
- **First name.**
- **Middle name/initial.** (if available)
- **Last name.**
- **Housing assignment or unit.**
- **Sex/gender.** (numeric code and associated documentation explaining the code)
- **Date of birth.**
- **Race.** (numeric code and associated documentation explaining the code)
- **Ethnicity.** (numeric code and associated documentation explaining the code)
- **Current prison admission date.** The date the person was admitted to the current facility/ prison.
- **Sentence length.** If sentence length is not available, maximum release date [preferred] or expected release date will suffice.

- **Offense type (FBOP facilities only).**

Please DO NOT include Social Security Numbers.

Transmission of Rosters

Rosters can be transmitted to RTI in two ways:

1. Uploading to the project's secure website (preferred) or
2. Emailing a password protected file (roster) to project staff. Excel files are preferred; however, please produce the roster in whatever format is most convenient for you.

Instructions for uploading to the website and for password protecting a file will be provided before the first roster file is requested.

Social/Behavioral or Noninterventional Research Protocol

1.0 Protocol Title: Survey of Prison Inmates Research and Development (SPI R&D)

2.0 Principal Investigator: Tim Smith

3.0 Summary of Research:

This clearance request is for a Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI) Field Test, with site recruitment planned to start in October 2024 and survey data collection planned from January through May of 2025. Thirty prisons and 3,000 incarcerated persons will be asked to participate. The goals of the Field Test are to (1) examine the capacity of facilities to support virtual survey administration and (2) assess the effects of administration mode on sample member participation and data quality.

4.0 Purpose of the Study, Specific Aims or Objectives, Hypotheses, and Research Questions:

At yearend 2022, an estimated 5,407,300 persons were under the supervision of adult correctional systems in the United States, a decline of less than 1% (down 38,400 persons) from yearend 2021. More than two-thirds of persons under correctional supervision were supervised in the community on probation or parole (3,668,800), while almost one-third (1,827,600) were incarcerated in state or federal prisons or jails. While the total community supervision population decreased 2% from yearend 2021 to yearend 2022, the incarcerated population increased 3%. The incarceration rate (700 per 100,000 adult U.S. residents in 2022, up from 680 per 100,000 in 2021) increased for the second consecutive year, but remained below the pre-COVID pandemic rate (810 per 100,000 in 2019). Such changes in population, needs, and experiences within facilities call for updated data that document the characteristics of people in prison today—particularly now as the impacts of and adjustments to the pandemic become apparent (Buehler & Kluckow, 2024).

The Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI) is a periodic, cross-sectional survey of state and federal prison populations nationwide. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) first introduced SPI in 1974, collecting data again six times, most recently in 2016. Like prior administrations of the survey, the 2016 SPI was a stratified two-stage sample design in which prisons were selected in the first stage and incarcerated persons within sampled facilities were selected in the second stage. The prison sample was selected from a universe of 2,001 unique prisons (1,808 state and 193 federal) that were either enumerated in the 2012 Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities or had opened between the completion of the census and July 2014. A total of 364 prisons (306 state and 58 federal) participated in the 2016 SPI out of 385 selected (324 state and 61 federal). The first-stage response rate (i.e., the response rate among selected prisons) was 98.4% (98.1% among state prisons and 100% among federal prisons). A total of 24,848 incarcerated persons participated (20,064 state and 4,784 federal) in the 2016 SPI, based on a sample of 37,058 persons (30,348 state and 6,710 federal). The second-stage response rate (i.e., the response rate among selected persons) was 70.0% (69.3% among persons incarcerated in state prisons and 72.8% among those in federal prisons).

BJS recognizes that the scope of effort needed to successfully conduct the SPI places significant burden on facilities and incarcerated persons and has taken several measures to minimize the burden. For example, protocols have been established to minimize burden on facilities as much as possible, including a customized data collection schedule and minimizing the number of days in the facility to conduct data collection. The protocols allow for flexibility given that facilities vary in terms of interviewing space, number of days and hours of each day when interviewing can be conducted, specific rules regarding items that may be brought into the prison, and instructions for arriving at the facility. Furthermore, every effort has been made to minimize the burden of the SPI administration on participants. The 2016 SPI questionnaire was designed and tested to maximize respondent comprehension. Also, the interview length was reduced from an average of 83 minutes in the 2013 SPI Pilot Study to an estimated 60 minutes, including the informed consent process, for the national implementation.

These efforts notwithstanding, opportunities exist to further reduce burden and enhance SPI data quality and utility for the next iteration through updates to the survey content and innovations to the data collection methods. BJS, with its data collection agent, RTI International, will develop and test a virtual computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) SPI to complement traditional in-person CAPI. Including a virtual CAPI option will help accommodate facilities' preferences and respondent circumstances that might affect their ability to participate, and improve data collection efficiency. Revisions to survey content might allow for the use of updated terminology and address

emerging issues affecting facility functions and the conditions of confinement. To ensure that incorporating new content does not adversely affect respondent burden and time for survey administration, the potential exists to link existing administrative data sources with the self-report survey data. In addition, the increased capacity of facilities to support virtual CAPI – largely resulting from technological changes made during the COVID pandemic – offers the potential to revisit data collection methods. Indeed, using new, and even multiple, interview modes for data collection might reduce facility and respondent burden, enhance accessibility, improve response rates, and reduce nonresponse bias.

5.0 Scientific or Scholarly Background and Significance of the Research

SPI is a periodic, cross-sectional survey of state and federal prison populations nationwide. The self-report survey collects information on topics such as imprisoned individuals' sociodemographic characteristics, criminal history and current offense and sentence, family background, mental and physical health, drug and alcohol use and treatment, participation in facility programs, and rule violations.

SPI is one of BJS's most prominent collections and plays a vital role in generating national estimates on risks and unmet needs among individuals sentenced to state and federal prisons. Given the importance of SPI, there is a pressing need to ensure that the survey content continues to address both longstanding and emerging issues affecting the incarcerated population and facilities in which they are housed, and that the survey research methods reflect best practices.

SPI has been a vital source of national statistics on characteristics of adults incarcerated in prisons. Because of SPI, we know that people held in prisons face significant health and socioeconomic challenges. Among those in state prisons, 51% report chronic health conditions, 43% have a history of mental health issues, and 31% and 39% were under the influence of alcohol or drugs, respectively, at the time of their offense (Maruschak et al., 2021). Moreover, approximately one-quarter of people in prison were unemployed and not seeking employment in the 30 days before arrest, and nearly two-thirds lack a high school education (Beatty & Snell, 2021; Maruschak & Snell, 2023). SPI data are also used to track changes over time, describe special populations, and identify policy-relevant shifts in prison populations.

6.1 Engagement, Single IRB, and IRB Oversight of Collaborators, Subcontractors, Vendors, Non-RTI Site Staff, and Sponsors Involved in Research that is Federally Funded or under Federal Human Subject Protection Regulations:

A. Does this protocol contemplate an engaged collaborator, vendor, subcontractor, non-RTI site staff, and/or sponsor? Yes ☐ No ☒

7.0 Sample Size and Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

The 2019 Census of State and Federal Adult Correctional Facilities (CCF) will serve as an initial frame for the field test and will inform the size of each domain in the population (e.g., state and federal, public and private operator, security level, gender of population). A two-stage design will be used for the field test. Since the field test will not be used to produce national estimates, the first stage will include a convenience sample of state Departments of Corrections (DOCs) and facilities that reflect the range of facilities eligible for the next SPI, including federal facilities under the jurisdiction of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP). RTI will leverage our relationships with several DOCs and the federal FBOP to gain cooperation and conduct the field test in up to seven DOCs and the federal system. From the selected DOCs and the FBOP, 40 facilities will be selected. The main sample will include 30 facilities with 10 additional facilities being held in reserve as replacements for any facilities in the main sample that are unable or unwilling to participate in the field test.

In the second stage, a random sample of incarcerated people will be selected from each participating facility. RTI will request rosters of incarcerated adults from each 3 weeks prior to the data collection visit; these rosters will be used to confirm that the facility can provide the information needed in a suitable format. The roster will include facility ID number, state or FBOP number, FBI fingerprint ID number, full name, housing unit, gender, date of birth, race, ethnicity, current prison admission date, and sentence length, and offense type (FBOP facilities only). Facility points-of-contact (POCs) will be asked to password protect or encrypt the roster file and upload it via an FTP site, or encrypted e-mail if they are not capable of using the FTP site, using instructions provided by

RTI (**Appendix 1**). RTI will also provide an example roster further demonstrating the variables and format needed (**Appendix 2**).

RTI will request that a second roster be sent no more than 1 week prior to data collection. Receiving the roster as close as possible to when data collection begins will ensure the person-level sampling frame is as accurate as possible. Once the roster is received, each sampled participant's record will be reviewed to ensure they are eligible to participate in the field test. Eligible participants include incarcerated people aged 18 and older who are held in a state prison or are serving a sentence to federal prison in the United States. Any ineligible people will be removed from the roster prior to sampling. RTI statisticians will use this second roster to select a random sample of up to 100 incarcerated people within each selected facility. To avoid overburdening small facilities that are included in the sample, if the sample size of incarcerated people per facility is more than 75% of a facility's population then the sample size will be capped at 75% of the facility population.

Both data collection modes that RTI has proposed are interviewer-administered; however, there could be mode effects based on whether the interviewer is physically present during the interview. Therefore, the field test will assess potential mode differences by randomly assigning selected inmates within each facility to one of two modes: (1) in-person, or (2) virtual. Within each facility, 50% of sampled inmates will be assigned to receive the in-person interview and 50% of sampled inmates will be assigned to participate in a virtual interview. The day before data collection is scheduled to begin at a facility, the selected sample of inmates, including their mode assignment, will be loaded into the data collection case management system and transmitted to the team of interviewers assigned to the particular facility.

The sample size of approximately 3,000 inmates (i.e., 100 inmates in each of 30 facilities) was chosen to ensure differences in outcomes between the two modes can be detected at the desired level of precision and with adequate power. Based on previous experience, we are assuming a response rate of 50% yielding approximately 750 completed field test interviews per mode for a total of 1,500 total interviews. After accounting for design effects and the model-based approach for evaluating mode effects, we will be able to detect differences in prevalence rates between modes of 5-7% or greater at a 5% significance level and with 80% power.

8.0 Special Populations:

- ☐ None
- ☐ Pregnant women (check this box only when the activities of the research may affect the pregnancy or the fetus or when the study specifically targets women due to their status as pregnant women.)
- ☒ Prisoners or other detained individuals.
- ☐ RTI employees or their immediate family members (this category is not meant to include RTI employees or their immediate family members who are incidentally included and whose status as employees or immediate family members is not known at the time of enrollment.)
- ☐ Adults unable to consent or with impaired decision-making capacity
- ☐ Individuals who are not yet adults (minors): infants, children, teenagers
- ☐ Other – specify
- ☐ International Research

9.0 Recruitment:

Check all methods that will be used to identify and recruit study participants. (Check all that apply)

☐ Medical record review

☐ Database

☐ Clinical practice

☐ Treating physician, PCP, or Clinic staff

☐ Referral

☐ Enrollment by Clinic

☐ Subject response to recruitment materials

☐ Household visit

☐ Random digit dialing

☐ Online research panel vendor

☐ Recruitment Vendor/Qualitative Facility

☐ Advocacy Group/Consumer Group

☐ Snowball Sampling or other consumer-driven identification of subjects

☐ RTI staff will refer friends/family

☐ Intercept/Field Outreach

☐ School or Military

☐ Onsite rostering or recruiting

☒ Roster or data for sampling provided in advance

by Military or School/District/State

☐ Other:

State Departments of Corrections and Bureau of Prisons

Initial outreach will be by mail to the agency heads. This letter from BJS to the DOC and FBOP agency head (**Appendix 3**) will introduce the field test and request an agency POC. Phone and email outreach by RTI Logistics Managers (LMs) will ensue with any nonrespondent agency head to determine willingness to participate. LMs will discuss the study goals, general data collection protocols, and mode assignment with the DOC agency heads or their designee.

Once identified, RTI will send a letter to each facility POC (on BJS's behalf), notifying them of the agency's approval and providing information about the field test (**Appendix 4**). RTI will then follow-up by phone with each POC to discuss study goals, general data collection protocols, and any requirements for review and approval of the study protocol by a local Institutional Review Board or other research review committee. To support this effort, RTI will provide a facility FAQ document via email (**Appendix 5**). LMs will work with the POCs to arrange logistics for each facility including scheduling data collection, determining a primary and secondary facility POC that will be present at the facility during the data collection, submitting security clearances for research staff, and obtaining roster files. As facilities are scheduled, the LM will request the inmate rosters (described above) from either the DOC or directly from the facility.

In addition, RTI will prepare and submit any required materials needed for interviewer clearance. Between the time a facility agrees to participate and the launch of data collection at the facility, RTI will document all approved plans and procedures and share that with the POC to ensure a mutual understanding of the protocol. In the days immediately prior to the data collection, RTI will confirm the plan and arrange for study staff (i.e., a site coordinator and interviewing team) to travel to the facility in accordance with the agreed upon schedule. If a staff member does not pass a facility-level background check for any reason, they will not be permitted to conduct any interviews at that facility and will be substituted with another interviewer. If a staff member does not pass a DOC-level background check applicable throughout the state, they will not be permitted to conduct interviews at any of that state's facilities.

Sampled Incarcerated Persons

The site coordinator will provide designated facility staff with the roster of sampled persons and coordinate with facility staff on sample flow. They will request that to manage the flow, facility staff retrieve no more than two individuals at a time for every interviewer and adjust the flow as needed to keep things moving efficiently. This strategy reduces the waiting time of sampled persons, thus reducing refusals, as well as avoids too many people waiting together at any one time, which may interfere with facility protocols. In situations where a sample member is unavailable when called, interviewers will make subsequent attempts to interview the individual during the data collection visit. Sampled individuals who are not willing to meet with the interviewer at the time they are called because they have other important activities (e.g., work, class, visits with attorney or family, etc.) will be called again later in the week with the hope that they will be willing to meet with the interviewer and hear about the study. Similarly, individuals who refuse to leave their housing unit to meet with the interviewer will be called

again later in the week unless the facility will not allow the second call. If a sampled individual again refuses to meet with the interviewer, the interviewer will finalize the case as a refusal.

Interviewers are encouraged to maintain professionalism and respect for sample members, establish good rapport by being enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and avoid being abrasive or aggressive. They are encouraged to study the possible responses in anticipation of sample members' questions, making sure every potential study respondent understands how important they are to the overall success of the study. They are encouraged to say something like, "This is your chance to tell us about your experiences here at this facility. Without you, no one will know what you have experienced here. No one will ever know the questions you were asked or the answers that you gave because your name is never connected with your answers."

After a sampled person has been escorted to the interview location, the interviewer will verify the person's identity (based on ID number and birth date) and describe the project by reviewing the consent form (**Appendix 6**) as described in Section 10.0. During the consent process, sample members will also be informed of the plan to link their survey data to administrative records. If the person declines data linkage, the interviewer will note this refusal, but the survey can still be administered.

10.0 Consent Process:

A. Description of Consent Process:

After an incarcerated person has been escorted to the interview location, an interviewer will describe the project by reviewing the consent form (**Appendix 6**). Two versions of the consent form will be used during data collection. One version will include mention of a small incentive (approximate $2 value, such as a snack or stamped envelope) and the other will not. During the agency recruitment process, LMs will discuss with POCs potential use of incentives. RTI has found that offering an incentive helps to motivate participation. For example, on NIS-3, the average response rate in prisons that allowed incentives was 66.2%, compared to 57.4% in those that did not allow incentives (Caspar et al., 2012).

Some agencies may require modifications to the consent text (e.g., referring to sample members as "prisoners" vs. "incarcerated persons." The RTI PI will submit an amendment request to the IRB and wait for approval prior to agreeing to any modification.

Interviewers will read the form out loud and address any questions the potential respondent might have. If the interview is done in-person, the interviewer will pass a copy of the consent form to the sample member, letting them know that they should follow along as the interviewer reads. The copy of the consent form the sample member receives is written in 3rd person ("Your interviewer will…"), whereas the interviewer's copy contains the first person version of each consent form (says "I will…" instead "the interviewer will…"). If the interview is done virtually, the facility staff escort will provide a copy of the form to the sample member. Interviewers are required to read the form out loud even if the sample members states that they can read. For confidentiality reasons, a participant is not asked to sign the form. If the facility permits it, respondents can keep the form. During the consent process, potential participants will be informed of the plan to link their survey data to administrative records. If the participant declines data linkage, the interviewer will note this refusal, but the survey can still be administered.

B. Individuals involved in the process of obtaining informed consent:

RTI field staff

C. Training and Monitoring of Staff Involved in the Administration or Oversight of Consent

Over the prior rounds of prison-based data collection studies, we have developed training materials including field staff manuals, near-verbatim training guides, home studies, training exercises, and job aides. These will form the basis for materials used for the SPI field test, revising wherever necessary to reflect new protocols or requirements. As necessary, we will develop additional materials to address any unanticipated issues experienced once data collection begins. Depending on the situation, these may be disseminated to the field staff by e-mail, hard copy, or telephone training.

RTI will use a near-verbatim training guide to conduct a 2-day training session. This enables each member of the field staff to receive the same information. Elements of training will include:

- study overview and goals
- working in a prison environment
- informed consent/confidentiality

- administering the questionnaire
- identifying and handling distressed respondents
- the role of the site coordinator
- data transmission
- production goals

The training on informed consent/confidentiality will address the requirements regarding privacy (e.g., approved interview areas, distance from facility staff, no video cameras) and procedures to avoid coercion or pressure. Importantly, when incarcerated persons refuse or are unable to participate, the protocol does not allow interviewers to "substitute" non-sampled individuals to replace those not participating. The incarcerated population and facility staff will be informed that not all incarcerated residents will qualify for the study and that some sampled individuals might refuse to participate in the study. Neither facility staff nor other incarcerated people will know if an individual who remains in the interview room for less than the expected 30 minutes refused to participate or did not qualify to participate for some reason. Interviewers will be trained to adhere to the following script if they are ever asked by facility staff why someone might not qualify to participate in the study: "I am sorry, but I am not able to share that information."

D. Ensuring Consent/Assent/Permission is Fully Informed and Voluntary:

The information is presented in language which is understandable to the participant. Consent procedures and interviews will be conducted in English and Spanish by interviewers fluent in the language. Inmates who speak neither English nor Spanish will not be interviewed. All study materials shared with the inmate will undergo review to ensure the text is easily understood. The consent processes will also include a project address, should a respondent have questions and wish to contact the study team.

E. Consent Procedures for Individuals who Do Not Speak, Read, or Understand English

This study may obtain consent from individuals who do not speak, read, or understand English **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

Consent procedures will be conducted in English and Spanish by interviewers fluent in the language. The consent text and procedures are the same for both language groups.

F. Adults with Cognitive Impairments that Impact their Ability to Provide Legally Effective Consent:

This study will include adults with cognitive impairments that impact their ability to provide legally effective consent **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

G. Assent and Parent Permission:

This study will include children **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

11.0 Documentation of Consent/Assent/Permission:

☒ **Option 2** Consent/Assent/Permission will not be documented by participant/parent signature on an informed consent/assent/permission form.

A. Procedures for ensuring use of IRB approved consent/assent/permission materials:

Approved facility-specific consent forms will be shipped to the interviewing team the week prior to data collection at the facility.

B. Procedures for documenting consent/assent/permission without participant/parent signature:

The CAPI application will require that the interviewer record the response to the consent question before starting the survey instrument. This response will be included in the data record for the participant.

C. Procedures for obtaining and maintaining signed documentation of informed consent/assent/permission:

N/A

12.0 Waiver of Consent or Alteration of the Consent Process to Allow Omission of One or More Required Elements:

☒ **Option 2** Informed consent will be obtained but the provision of one or more required elements will be omitted. A justification for omitted elements is included below. The following criteria are true:

☒ The research involves no more than Minimal Risk to the subjects.

☒ The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration

☒ Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.

☐ If the research involves using identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens, the research could NOT practicably be carried out without using such information or biospecimens in an identifiable format. (N/A if research is DOJ-funded OR if research does not use identifiable private information or biospecimens) ☒ N/A

Justification for omitted element(s):

One of the goals of the field test is to examine respondents' willingness to consent to data linkage. See Section 13. To achieve this goal, the consent process will include an element of deception. Sample members will be presented information that suggests their survey data will be linked to administrative records, even though the linkage will not be done. Although we could present sample members with a hypothetical scenario (i.e., "if you were asked, would you be willing to..."), however this would not gauge participants' real propensity to consent. Therefore, deception is required.

13.0 Deception:

BJS does not intend to link the data from the field test. The consent form includes the request to link in order to mirror the actual national SPI and assess willingness to agree. After the interview, respondents who consented to the linkage will be told, "Earlier, I told you that your survey answers would be linked to other information about you. Thank you for agreeing to that part of the study, but we will not need to link your answers. It is very helpful to know that you would be willing to permit that."

14.0 Study Procedures Involved:

A. Describe the study procedures: This should include information that has not already been discussed about the study design, the process for random assignment and the difference between the study arms, the research procedures and where and by whom they will be performed.

Once the study is approved by the agency, and depending on the instructions we receive from the agency, LMs will work with either a central office contact or directly with a facility contact to define procedures for the following aspects of data collection:

- Facility logistics—such as scheduling and space requirements
- Staff clearance requirements—background checks on the FIs
- Rosters—including all inmates at the facility, with an update(s) provided during lead up to the data collection visit
- Onsite coordination—such as field supplies/materials, entry into the facility, and inmate flow

Our experience on other prison-based data collections indicates that most state facility administrative management staff prefer to negotiate study logistics with RTI directly, as opposed to having central office staff act as an intermediary between RTI and the facility. In these situations, once the study has been approved by a DOC, the DOC will provide facility-level contact information to RTI. LMs will then reach out to the facilities sampled within the agency and begin the planning process. Occasionally, the DOC contact will suggest that the LM contact someone in the facility administrator's office to identify who they should work with to coordinate the study. In some cases, several facility staff will be assigned to coordinate or perform specific activities defined in the study protocol.

Once approval has been received from the FBOP, a central office FBOP contact will provide support and run National Crime Information Center clearances for project staff to enter FBOP facilities. After approval is received from the FBOP central office, the FBOP contact likely will coordinate all roster needs for each sampled

facility. All other planning and coordination likely will be done through direct communication between RTI LMs and a designated contact person from each facility. The facility contact will be responsible for coordinating details such as dates of data collection, interview locations, and policies and procedures for data collection.

All information collected about a facility during the planning process will be entered into SPIweb by the LM. Once all relevant information is obtained, the system will generate a customized Logistics Plan in either a draft or final format. The draft plan will be sent to the facility contact to verify the description of any arrangements that were discussed. Once the contact confirms all information is correct, the LM will finalize the plan and send the final version to the contact. (The LM will provide the central office FBOP contact with a copy of the final Logistics Plan for each facility.) Members of the field team will also get a copy of the final plan so that they understand what has been agreed to. Often planning takes place weeks or even months before data collection, so a copy of the final plan, along with a reminder about the scheduled data collection and roster due dates, will be sent to the facility contact 1 to 2 weeks before data collection is scheduled to begin.

B. Provide detailed descriptions of the interventions, and data collection activities, a study timeline including the duration/burden of an individual's participation in the study and the overall anticipated duration of the project:

Site recruitment is planned to start in October 2024 and survey data collection is planned from January through May of 2025. Thirty facilities and 3,000 incarcerated persons will be asked to participate.

When setting the date for the facility visit, several interrelated factors will be addressed including facility preferences and requirements, field staff availability, and space (i.e., interview areas) options. Naturally, there will be greater flexibility when scheduling facilities early in the process—while team schedules are more open. As more facilities are scheduled, fewer open weeks will be available to schedule remaining facilities as they come on board. However, the LMs will make every effort to accommodate facility schedules.

We will discuss scheduling issues facing the facility early in the planning period. These issues might include events that affect the ability of facility staff to support the data collection effort (e.g., conferences, audits, holidays) and could constrain when the visit might occur. Once scheduled, if a facility becomes unable to accommodate the study team during the week that was previously agreed upon, the LM will work with the data collection task leader and the facility contact to select another date.

As previously described, another factor that will influence when our team can visit the facility, and for how long, is the need to conduct the interviews in private or semi-private and secure areas. Most facilities will request that we conduct interviews during normal "business hours," which typically occur from 6:00 am to 5:00 pm. During data collection visits, factors such as shift changes, facility count times, mealtimes, attorney visits, educational and vocational programming, treatment programming, work assignments, recreation activities and visitation can constrain the hours during which we can interview in a facility. In some instances, a facility may approve or request extending the interviewing hours on one or more days or even adding another day (e.g., Saturday) to the schedule.

The number of available areas and the hours during which our staff can interview inmates will determine how many interviewers to assign to a facility. As much as possible, LMs will work with the facility contact to negotiate a data collection visit lasting on average 4 to 5 days. If the facility only has a small number of areas available, the LMs may need to increase the time per day that the interviewing will occur in order to complete data collection within that visit period. If it is not possible to increase the number of areas or the amount of time per day that the interviewing team can work, data collection may need to last longer to completely work the sample.

Sample members will be escorted to the interview area and wait for the first available interviewer – typically 15 to 30 minutes. Individual interviews (including consent) will take approximately 1 hour. If the interview is interrupted (e.g., meal time, lock-down), the interviewer will ask the respondent return to complete the interview. Once the interview is completed, no further contact will be made with the respondent.

C. Confirm that intervention documentation, data collection instruments, and all participant-facing materials (and the translated versions if applicable) have been uploaded to IRB Express or describe the timeline for submitting those materials to the IRB prior to their use in the field.

SPI is a periodic, cross-sectional survey of state and federal prison populations nationwide. The survey instrument that will be used for the field test is nearly identical to that used for the 2016 SPI. (Several routing/programming errors found in the 2016 instrument have been corrected.) The self-report survey collects

information on topics such as imprisoned individuals' sociodemographic characteristics, criminal history and current offense and sentence, family background, mental and physical health, drug and alcohol use (prior to incarceration) and treatment, participation in facility programs, and rule violations.

E. If linking to administrative data or abstracting chart data, describe the process:

Linking existing administrative data sources with the self-report survey data will help ensure that incorporating new content into the SPI instrument does not adversely affect respondent burden and time for survey administration.

As stated above, during the consent potential participants will also be asked if RTI can link their identity to administrative records, i.e., Record of Arrests and Prosecutions (RAP) sheets contain information on arrests, charges, and convictions. If the participant declines data linkage, the interviewer will note this refusal, but the survey can still be administered.

15.0 Risks to Participants and Mitigation Strategies:

A. Describe the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, hazards, or inconveniences related to an individual's participation in the research and describe the probability, magnitude, duration, and reversibility of the risks:

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, hazards, or inconveniences related to an individual's participation. All sample members have the right to refuse to participate; those who agree can still decline to answer any question or end the interview prior to completion. Interviews will be scheduled with participants so as to avoid other commitments (mealtimes, attorney visits, educational and vocational programming, treatment programming, work assignments, recreation activities and visitation).

B. Describe the risks and procedures associated with withdrawal of participants:

The incarcerated population and facility staff will be informed that not all incarcerated residents will qualify for the study and that some sampled individuals might refuse to participate in the study. Neither facility staff nor other incarcerated people will know if an individual who remains in the interview room for less than the expected 60 minutes refused to participate or did not qualify to participate in the SPI for some reason. Interviewers will be trained to adhere to the following script if they are ever asked by facility staff why someone might not qualify to participate in the study: "I am sorry, but I am not able to share that information."

Respondents might react to the interview or to interaction with an interviewer in ways that are outside the normal protocol. Specifically, they might become emotionally distressed or make spontaneous statements about (1) plans to harm themselves or another person, (2) plans to commit a future crime, or (3) sexual assault while in the facility. Standard procedures for reporting these statements to the appropriate project staff and other authorities have been developed for SPIRD; inmates will be notified of the limitations to confidentiality and the reporting procedures during the consent process. Interviewers will receive training on how these issues are addressed in the consent protocols and how they should respond if these situations arise (e.g., notifying the Supervisor and Data Collection Task Leader, notifying facility staff). Documenting occurrences of these events will be done using two methods across one form (**Appendix 7**):

- By checking the "D.R." indicator on this form, the Distressed Respondent Protocol will be used to document expressions of suicidal ideation, emotional distress, intentions to harm another person, or knowledge of current child/elder abuse or neglect. Instructions on how interviewers are to respond in such situations will be provided in the interviewer manual. For example, if a respondent expresses to the interviewer an intention to harm themself or someone else, the protocol will direct the interviewer to remind the respondent that this intention must be conveyed to facility staff and to notify the facility POC or a corrections officer immediately after the interview.
- By checking the "Incident" indicator on this form, the Incident Report Form will be used to document other unusual events that might occur during the interview and affect the quality of the interview data. Some examples include facility lockdowns of over 1 hour, escapes, and riots.

SPIRD is not related in any way to the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and the interview does not address sexual contact among inmates or with facility staff. However, it is possible that an inmate will

spontaneously make a statement about such events. To comply with state regulations and ethical concerns, field staff will follow the appropriate state reporting protocol.

16.0 Benefits to Participants:

(Note: Participation in the research itself and compensation from participating in the research are not benefits.)

There are no direct benefits to participants.

17.0 Compensation:

A. Describe any financial or other compensation that will be provided to participants: Include how much money or what gifts will be provided and for what activities. Include a description of the process, form, and timing for providing compensation.

As stated above, RTI has found that offering a small incentive to sample members helps to motivate participation. For example, on NIS-3, the average response rate in prisons that allowed incentives was 66.2%, compared to 57.4% in those that did not allow incentives (Caspar et al., 2012). During SPIRD logistics planning, LMs will discuss with facility POCs potential use of incentives (approximate $2 value such as a snack). Incentives are subject to approval at both the DOC and facility level.

18.0 Provisions to Protect the Privacy Interests of Participants:

Only staff assigned to work on SPI R&D who have been granted access by the PD or PM will be given access to the share drives. All users must:

- Complete approved security awareness prior to being granted access to any resource that contains PII;
- Complete annual information security awareness training;
- Report any suspected violation of policy and actively protect the information assets of RTI.

The list of these staff and their compliance with all data protection requirements is maintained by RTI and reviewed on a semi-annual basis throughout the project period by the PM.

Project staff have access to information for all agencies, rosters, and completed interviews and surveys only after logging into the RTI private network via VPN, controlled through RTI's corporate infrastructure. Access to project data, file shares, databases, web resources, and analytics files is available only while connected through VPN and granted role permissions via Active Directory. These permissions are requested, reviewed, and approved by the PD and their delegates.

D. Is this study requesting that the RTI IRB grant or modify a HIPAA Waiver of Authorization? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

E. Does this submission include a stand-alone HIPAA Authorization document or is there HIPAA Authorization language embedded in the study consent document? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

19.0 Confidentiality and Data Management:

See response to 10.C. and 24.A. regarding training.

RTI will employ technical, administrative, and physical procedures and controls to comply with the confidentiality requirements described in 28 C.F.R., Part 22. All SPI R&D data will be stored in compliance with conditions of the award and RTI data protection and privacy requirements. All individually identifiable or nonpublic data will be stored in a FIPS-Moderate environment; all other data will be stored in a FIPS-Low environment. These requirements include protecting personal data, educating and informing employees of the risks, tracking our data storage and transmission, and maintaining auditable record-keeping of all personal data handling activities.

To ensure compliance, all SPI R&D data files will be encrypted and stored on an internal, restricted-access RTI-only project share drives. Our systems prevent files from being copied to an unencrypted external drive, and all files copied from our share drives are logged and reviewed for compliance with the data management specifications noted here. File share folders will be organized by task with subtasks within each task. The exact structure will be defined overtime based on the needs of the project. Specific folder names can be provided to BJS on request.

All SPI R&D data files will be encrypted prior to delivery and stored in on one of three secure locations:

1. Internal, RTI-only FIPS-Low project share drive;
2. Internal, RTI-only share drive on FIPS-moderate compliant, enhanced security network which stores roster, survey, and survey meta-data; and
3. A restricted-access Microsoft SQL Server database. All SQL databases used by SPI R&D are relational in nature. Back-up copies, file extracts, and design documentation can be provided.

RTI has developed a secure, password-protected website to manage the flow of information between the Sampling, Logistics, and Data Collection teams on our prison-based surveys.

RTI conducts nightly backup of all project files and data to minimize risk of loss and ensure the integrity, accuracy, and completeness of all data collected and stored through the project. These files can be recovered for up to 90 days, and usually within 24 hours of request.

All traffic to the FTP website is encrypted through SSL. All of RTI's servers containing client data are owned by RTI on assets controlled by RTI administrators including any disaster recovery colocation servers and devices (as required for compliance purposes). Cloud-based services will not be used.

Any physical data, such as rosters (if mailed in error), will be scanned and saved to our encrypted project share. Physical copies will be stored in locked file cabinets and can be provided to BJS at the conclusion of the contract if requested. Otherwise, all physical forms will be shredded.

22.0 Data Sharing, Future Use, and Storage:

RTI will employ technical, administrative, and physical procedures and controls to comply with the confidentiality requirements described in 28 C.F.R., Part 22. All SPI R&D data will be stored in compliance with conditions of the award and RTI data protection and privacy requirements. All individually identifiable or nonpublic data will be stored in a FIPS-Moderate environment; all other data will be stored in a FIPS-Low environment. These requirements include protecting personal data, educating and informing employees of the risks, tracking our data storage and transmission, and maintaining auditable record-keeping of all personal data handling activities.

To ensure compliance, all SPI R&D data files will be encrypted and stored on an internal, restricted-access RTI-only project share drives. Our systems prevent files from being copied to an unencrypted external drive, and all files copied from our share drives are logged and reviewed for compliance with the data management specifications noted here. File share folders will be organized by task with subtasks within each task. The exact structure will be defined overtime based on the needs of the project. Specific folder names can be provided to BJS on request.

All SPI R&D data files will be encrypted prior to delivery and stored in on one of three secure locations:

1. Internal, RTI-only FIPS-Low project share drive;
2. Internal, RTI-only share drive on FIPS-moderate compliant, enhanced security network which stores roster, survey, and survey meta-data; and
3. A restricted-access Microsoft SQL Server database. All SQL databases used by SPI R&D are relational in nature. Back-up copies, file extracts, and design documentation can be provided.

RTI has developed a secure, password-protected website to manage the flow of information between the Sampling, Logistics, and Data Collection teams on our prison-based surveys.

Project staff have access to information for all agencies, rosters, and completed interviews and surveys only after logging into the RTI private network via VPN, controlled through RTI's corporate infrastructure. Access to project data, file shares, databases, web resources, and analytics files is available only while connected through VPN and granted role permissions via Active Directory. These permissions are requested, reviewed, and approved by the PD and their delegates.

RTI conducts nightly backup of all project files and data to minimize risk of loss and ensure the integrity, accuracy, and completeness of all data collected and stored through the project. These files can be recovered for up to 90 days, and usually within 24 hours of request.

All traffic to the FTP website is encrypted through SSL. All RTI's servers containing client data are owned by RTI on assets controlled by RTI administrators including any disaster recovery colocation servers and devices (as required for compliance purposes). Cloud-based services will not be used.

Any physical data, such as rosters (if mailed in error), will be scanned and saved to our encrypted project share. Physical copies will be stored in locked file cabinets and can be provided to BJS at the conclusion of the contract if requested. Otherwise, all physical forms will be shredded.

At the end of the field test, RTI will deliver a data set that includes identifiable records of every rostered individual. The files will include all the data elements collected on the roster (e.g., name) and, for those who participated in the interview, the survey data and indicator of consent to allow for linkage to other existing data maintained by the government (per the consent form). BJS does not intend to link the data from the field test. The consent form includes the request to link in order to mirror the actual national SPI and assess willingness to agree. BJS does not intend to release any study data to the public, even as a restricted use file.

No later than 30 days prior to the project period end date, RTI will provide to BJS for its review and approval:

- a final list of all data and documentation specified above;
- copies of all datasets or information collected or maintained to complete the BJS-funded activities (via secure transfer for identifiable information, as applicable); and
- copies of all statistical or project-related documentation developed during the award period.

Prior to 120 days after the project period end date, but only after seeking and obtaining BJS's authorization, RTI will destroy all datasets and documentation that include identifiable or nonpublic information that:

- were provided by BJS for the express purpose of completing approved SPI R&D activities, or
- were developed, expanded, or collected by RTI using BJS's funds during the award period.

23.0 Quality Management Plan

☒ This is an SSES study that is not FDA-CTP funded

☒ This study has a QMP.

Describe here if and how the quality management plan will be used to help ensure appropriate human subject protection and compliance with this protocol.

We have a detailed Quality Management Plan that documents the quality assurance (QA) and QC checks that we will implement across all tasks and activities. We recognize that the different components of data collection are unique, and each has its own set of challenges. As a result, we created detailed protocols for each component. These protocols will include several topics, such as how and when data will be reviewed, monitored, and verified. RTI will employ various techniques to ensure collection of the highest quality data while containing costs.

The data collection team will monitor the quality of data collection through data examination. Specific data and instrumentation characteristics staff will examine will include the following:

- questions with a larger than expected proportion of "don't know," "other," "not applicable," or "refused" responses;
- routing patterns of completed cases to ensure logic accuracy and consistency;
- lengths of interview sections; and
- any evidence of interviewer "shortcutting" or falsification.

24.0 Qualifications to Conduct Research, Resources Available, and Quality Control

A. ☒ Check here to affirm that study team members are appropriately qualified to conduct the research

The SPI R&D RTI staff has experience with the SPI, NIS, and MDPS protocols. Our PI, Tim Smith, has over 30 years of experience in survey research and project management. He is also a member of RTI's IRB. In addition, Mr. Smith served as the PI on the 2016 SPI. Scarlett Pucci, the SPI R&D PM, was a logistics manager on the NIS-3 and has a broad and deep understanding of the protocols that will be used on this contract. Hannah Everhart, the Data Collection Task Leader, was a logistics manager on MDPS, giving her a full understanding of the protocols that will be used on this contract.

LM training will focus on key procedures specific to contacting DOCs and facilities, gaining cooperation, obtaining detailed information about space and other facility requirements, and entering individual facility-relevant notes. A 1-day training, led by RTI's Data Collection Task Lead, will focus on the skills unique to DOC and facility recruitment, such as how to determine who has the authority to decide about facility participation. Training will also focus on skills needed to work with DOCs and facilities to adapt procedures in a way that

facilitates each facility's participation. Training will include mock phone calls where LMs can practice gathering information about the facility. Periodic meetings will be held where LMs will be asked to share information about successful techniques for reaching the appropriate DOC and facility staff, and adaptions that were made to data collection requirements for facilities that have specific constraints (e.g., space limitations).

RTI's Field Staffing and Support group will lead the recruitment and hiring of field staff. One regional supervisor (RS) and one field supervisor (FS) will be hired first because they are responsible for hiring field staff. The RS will screen FS applicants and conduct interviews with the most qualified candidates to further assess their skills and experience. The RS will make FS hire recommendations for the Data Collection Team Lead to review and approve. A hire offer will be extended to the top candidate, contingent upon results of reference checks and background checks.

RTI recognizes the need to recruit and hire field staff with aptitude and skill in working with special populations. To recruit the highest quality interviewers, we will first focus on recruiting interviewers based on their experience and performance with prior correctional institution surveys or surveys that involved special populations. Preference in hiring field staff will be given to those with experience in interviewing in prison facilities and working on government-sponsored surveys. However, field staff candidates with transferable skills and experience, such as contact with the public, attention to detail, and organizational skills, will be considered.

The FS will conduct reference checks on each candidate, speaking with two professional references provided by the candidate. Once the candidate accepts the hire offer and returns the background check release form, official driving record and criminal background checks will be conducted. In addition, the background investigation process includes a search of records of criminal history repositories from participating jurisdictions in 49 states and searches of the National Sex Offender Public Website, the General Services Administration's database of debarred individuals, and terrorist watchlists.

We anticipate hiring approximately 16 field staff, 4 of whom will be bilingual in Spanish. RTI has excellent Spanish-speaking bilingual interviewers located throughout the country, and we have included a large pool in our planning for hiring field staff. The distribution of the field staff will vary somewhat depending on the sample. To the extent possible, field staff will be hired locally to minimize costs; however, we also plan to hire traveling field staff who can travel to and work in non-local areas as needed.

Field staff and FS training will take place over the course of 2-3 days. Discussions on study protocol, the research procedures, and their duties and functions will be led by a trainer. The SPI instrument will be introduced to field staff through a question-by-question overview followed by a trainer demonstration. Each field staff member will have the opportunity to operate the instrument during a group walk-through and a solo exercise. Training will include small group exercises between one trainer and multiple field staff (the virtual conference program used during training will allow for "breakout rooms" between select individuals participating in the call). Field staff will also receive training focused on working in prison facilities (e.g., security procedures, interacting with facility staff and inmates, offering incentives, completing breakoffs, complying with mandatory reporting requirements).

RTI will maintain strict policies on the quality of our field staff, who will be required to demonstrate proficiency in facilitating informed consent procedures and correctly administering the instrument before they will be certified to work as RTI field staff. Certification will occur at the end of the training. Bilingual FIs will receive additional training and must pass certifications in both English and Spanish. interviewers who do not pass certification will be provided immediate feedback and retraining by the certifier to clarify any points of confusion. Any field staff member failing the certification process will either be placed on probation (and barred from working until proper completion of further retraining and recertification) or terminated from the project.

B. ☒ Check here to affirm that there be monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with the approved protocol.

C. Are the study activities under the oversight of multiple IRBs? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

D. Does the study include collaborators, subcontractors, vendors, participating sites, or sponsors who will be engaged in the research (e.g., consenting participants, interacting with participants, or obtaining or using identifiable data or specimens? (See table in Section 6 of this protocol) **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒