

## **B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

### **1. Universe and Respondent Selection**

The NPS covers the entire universe of state and federal prisons, as well as prisons in U.S. territories. A form is sent to the research section of each state department of corrections and the Federal BOP (FBOP) and is usually completed by a statistician or research analyst. NPS does not include questions on individual private prisons or local jails, but BJS does collect aggregate counts of any state or federal prisoners held in these facilities (NPS-1B questions 3-5).

### **2. Procedures for Information Collection**

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Data collection mode is both a fillable pdf survey form sent directly to all state Departments of Correction by email and the FBOP and a web option that resembles the form. Each jurisdiction has an individual password to enter the website and can view its own data, but no one else's. The website will be hosted by BJS's data collection agent and located on a secure server. In 2024, all jurisdictions submitted their data via the secure website.

The NPS-1B or NPS-1B(T) forms for collection of data in 2025, 2026, and 2027 will be sent out on December 15th of the reference year to the 56 jurisdictions, along with a cover letter from BJS explaining the importance of the survey (**Appendices 2, 3, 7**). Respondents will be asked to submit the data by the due date on the form (the last business day of February) via the secure online website (screenshots from the 2024 collection in **Appendix 8**), fax, or mail. BJS's data collection agent will receive and check the submitted survey data. If data are not received by the due date, BJS and the data collection agent will send a reminder email asking jurisdictions to submit their data as soon as possible (**Appendix 9**).

Jurisdictions are contacted via email approximately 10 weeks prior to publication of the annual report with eight BJS tabulations of the NPS data. Jurisdictions are asked to verify only their own statistics and never asked to provide additional information or make any calculations. The purpose of this verification is simply to allow jurisdictions to understand how their data will be presented to the public, and to communicate with BJS regarding any concerns they may have.

#### *Data Processing*

Upon receipt of a survey (web or PDF), data will be reviewed and edited, and if needed, the respondent will be contacted to clarify answers or provide missing information. Respondents who submit via web will be prompted with real-time validation checks when submitting missing or inconsistent data. Any unresolved items that remain after the

respondent submits will result in recontact by Abt staff to the respondent to attempt to resolve these issues.

*Data Editing.* Abt will reconcile missing or erroneous data through automated and manual edits of each questionnaire. In collaboration with BJS, Abt will develop edits that can be completed by referring to data provided by the respondent on the prior year's survey instrument. For example, if a question was left blank, but the prior year's questions were completed, Abt will impute a response based on the prior year's count and expected change. Through this process, Abt can quickly identify which hardcopy cases require follow-up and indicate the items that need clarification or retrieval from the respondent.

*Data Retrieval.* When the project team identifies a potential data issue, such as missing or inconsistent answers, an Abt professional staff member will contact the respondent for clarification. Throughout the data retrieval process, Abt will document the critical questions needing retrieval (e.g., missing or inconsistent data elements), request clarification on the provided information, obtain values for missing data elements, and examine any other issues related to the respondent's submission.

*Data Entry.* Respondents completing the survey via the web instrument will enter their responses directly into the online instrument. For those respondents returning the survey via hardcopy (mail or fax), data will be keyed by hand once received and determined complete. Manually entered surveys are reviewed for data quality issues using the same process as those received via the web instrument. Any issues will be investigated and resolved. Throughout the remainder of the data collection period, Abt staff will conduct regular data frequency reviews to evaluate the quality and completeness of data captured in both the web and hardcopy modes.

### **3. Methods to Maximize Response**

Over the years, BJS has had a greater than 95% response rate for NPS. When a state does not report to NPS, BJS has used data from the National Corrections Reporting program (NCRP; if the state has responded to that survey) or official department of corrections (DOC) reports to impute sex-specific prison custody and jurisdiction population counts, as well as numbers of admissions and releases for these years. All 50 states and the FBOP responded to the 2023 NPS collection by June 6, 2024. Routinely, BJS has reached out to the directors of the Departments of Corrections to attempt to encourage participation. This practice has generally resulted in the reporting of data by non-responding states in subsequent years.

Participation in the NPS-1B(T) collection by the 5 territories has waned over the years, in large part because of changes in respondents within the territorial DOCs. Once BJS has identified a respondent for a particular territory and worked with him/her to submit the NPS-1B(T) for a particular year, they will continue to submit until they move out of the DOC position, usually after about 2 years. BJS has tried to work with respondents to

leave documentation for their successors and has stressed the need for accurate population counts as the NPS custody population is the bases for calculating Residential Substance Abuse Treatment awards given to states and territories by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). BJS has also contacted BJA state administering agencies (SAAs; centralized state and territorial government personnel who handle applications and performance reporting for BJA) in the territories for assistance in identifying the correct person to respond to the NPS. In cases where no one could be contacted, BJS relied on territorial DOC website reports or legislative testimony to estimate the prison populations.

#### **4. Test of Procedures or Methods**

The only change proposed to the NPS-1B form is to remove questions that capture counts of incarcerated individuals with HIV/AIDS (Q14-Q18). These items may be included with other health-related questions in periodic supplements as part of the NPS program. If it is determined that HIV or other health related questions should be fielded during this clearance period, BJS will submit a substantive change request to OMB.

#### **5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection**

The Prisons Correction Statistics Unit at BJS is responsible for the overall design and management of the activities described in this submission, including fielding of the survey, data cleaning, and data analysis. BJS contacts include:

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