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IN THIS ISSUE

Legal pathways and safeguards

When credits do not become placement

Consistent rules and equitable access

Measuring placement fairness

Federal Prerelease Placement

Earned time, community access and equitable administration



A Human Systems Architecture examination of federal prerelease custody

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Federal Prerelease Placement

Earned time, community access and equitable administration

A themed research and policy volume

The Starlings Institute

Founding Editor-in-Chief
Kevin A. Starlings

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STARLINGS
Journal of
Human Systems Architecture
VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 1 | 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Federal Prerelease Placement

FRONT MATTER

Publication Information 3

About the Journal and Reader Guide 5

From the Editor in Chief 6

From Legal Eligibility to Actual Placement 7

ARTICLES

From Eligibility to Community Placement 9

When Earned Credits Do Not Become Placement 15

Consistent Rules Equitable Access 21

Measuring Prerelease Placement Fairness 27

RESEARCH APPENDICES

Appendix A Operational Research Instruments 34

Appendix B Evidence Register 40

CONCLUSIONS AND JOURNAL INFORMATION

Conclusions and Priorities for Action 42

About The Starlings Institute 44

Editorial and Research Review 45

About the Journal

The Starlings Journal of Human Systems Architecture examines how institutions and public systems shape the conditions of human life. It connects research, measurement, policy and practice through a human-centered systems perspective.

This volume applies that perspective to federal prerelease placement. Physical health, emotional wellbeing, environmental stability, relationships and cognitive access provide questions for investigation. They are not used here as validated scores or as substitutes for legal eligibility.

The contribution of this volume

Four articles distinguish governing law, documented national implementation problems, proposed administrative standards and instruments for future research. Together they provide a basis for testing whether legally available community placement is delayed and whether materially comparable people receive consistent treatment.

Reading the evidence

Each article has its own reference list. Reference numbers restart in each article. Statutes, regulations, judicial decisions, oversight reports and agency announcements have different legal and evidentiary roles. The articles preserve those distinctions and identify proposed changes as proposals.

Scope

Sources and case status are reported as of October 17, 2026. No original interviews, confidential case-file audit or completed comparison of institutions is reported. The separate Butner Community Placement Review remains preliminary and is outside this issue's completed article set.

Terms used in this volume

BOP Federal Bureau of Prisons	**PATTERN** Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risk and Needs
DSCC Designation and Sentence Computation Center	**RDAP** Residential Drug Abuse Program
FSA First Step Act	**RRC** Residential Reentry Center
GCT Good Conduct Time	**RRM** Residential Reentry Management
HC Home confinement	**SCA** Second Chance Act
HSA Human Systems Architecture	**FCPD** FSA Conditional Placement Date

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Kevin A. Starlings

FOUNDING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This volume asks how federal prerelease rules become real opportunities for community transition. A calculation, referral or housing decision can shape access to family, work, care and stable living conditions.

Our research position is that legally available placement should not be lost through preventable administrative delay. The articles examine the governing pathways, national oversight findings, administrative standards and methods for a fair comparison of cases.

The work also states its limits. National findings do not prove unequal treatment at Butner. That investigation remains preliminary. The next step is to obtain local instructions and dated case records, then test explanations against comparable evidence.

From legal eligibility to actual placement

Federal prerelease placement is a sequence of decisions with consequences for housing, family life, education, work and care. A legally supportable date does not organize a referral, approve a residence or arrange movement by itself. This volume examines the institutional work required to turn eligibility into an appropriate placement.

The Starlings Institute's contribution is an accountability framework that follows the person across those decisions. It asks how governing authority, calculation records, organizational responsibility and material support interact. It then connects each suspected failure to a corrective action and a measure that can show whether the action helps. This is an analytical framework proposed for investigation; it is not a validated prediction model or a completed facility audit.

Five questions for an accountable process

Question	Evidence needed to answer it
Which authority governs this decision	Applicable statute, regulation and operative instruction; earning and application eligibility; individualized SCA decision where relevant.
Which record supports the date	Sentence computation, risk assessments, earning intervals, code history, projected assumptions and reconciled changes.
Which office owns the next action	Dated transmission and acknowledgment, decision authority, dependencies, written reasons and escalation route.
What practical barrier remains	Residence verification, accessible placement, treatment continuity, monitoring, transportation or actual capacity constraints, with alternatives recorded.
What human consequence should be investigated	A documented opportunity or arrangement affected by timing, the person's account, alternative explanations and the eventual outcome.

These questions prevent a difference in placement timing from being treated as self-explanatory. The same observed delay can arise from a legal restriction, an inaccurate record, an uncompleted handoff, a placement judgment or a support barrier. The correction depends on the mechanism established by evidence.

What the evidence establishes

The national oversight reviewed in Article 2 documents weaknesses in data, planning and the administration of prerelease transfers within defined periods and populations. Dated BOP announcements describe efforts to improve credit application and placement. Those findings justify investigating how decisions are made and whether corrective changes reach local practice. They do not establish current conditions in every institution or prove unequal treatment at Butner.

What equal and equitable administration require

Equal administration means applying consistent calculation rules and decision standards to materially comparable people. Equitable access also requires attention to resources: an approved family residence, accessible care or assistance understanding a record can affect whether a person can use an available pathway. These are related questions, but they require different evidence and may require different interventions.

A defensible reform position therefore combines accurate calculations and timely decisions with practical support. The governing authority determines what placement is legally available; the administrative process should make its decision traceable, and the support system should address barriers that can appropriately be resolved.

How the articles work together

Article 1 identifies the legal pathways and limits of judicial review. Article 2 examines the documented implementation problems and instruction changes. Article 3 proposes controls, responsibilities and a pilot sequence. Article 4 defines the comparison method and measures; Appendices A and B provide the instruments and evidence register.

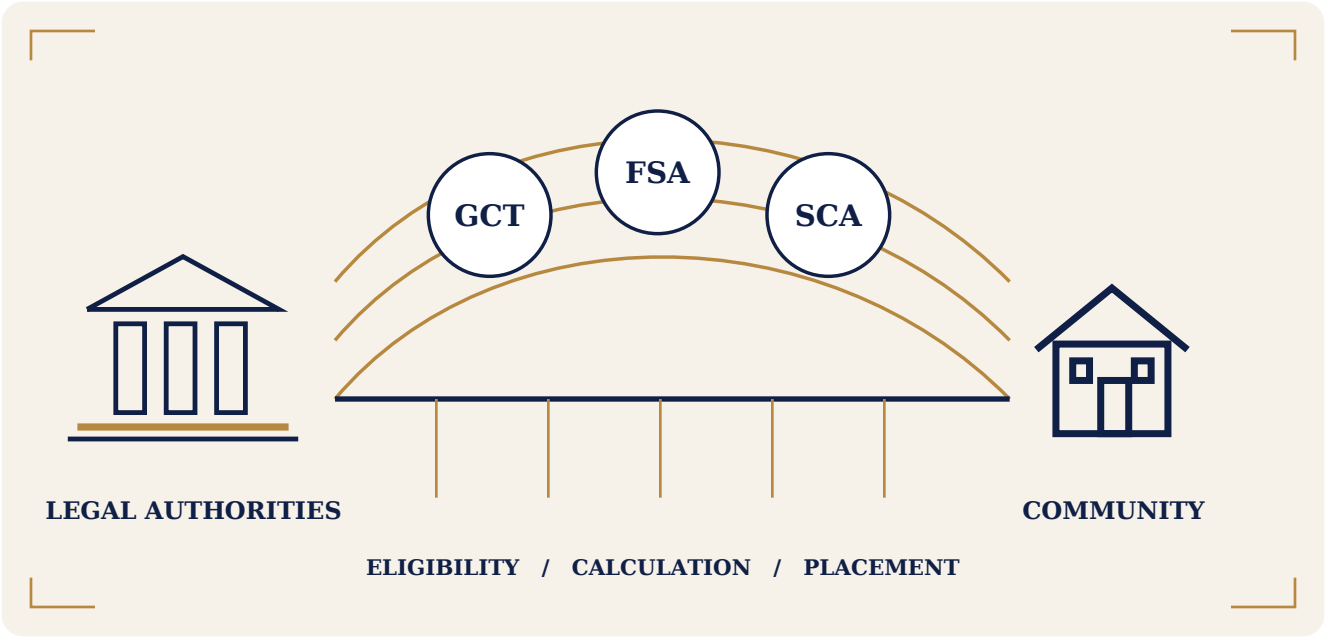
The central position is that legally available community placement should not be lost through preventable administrative delay. Testing that position requires both an account of what happened in a case and evidence identifying why it happened. The volume supplies the framework for that inquiry rather than announcing a local finding before the records are available.

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Journal of
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VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 1 | 2026

ARTICLE 01 / LEGAL ANALYSIS

From Eligibility to Community Placement

Legal pathways and calculation safeguards



Separate authorities shape the route to community placement

THE STARLINGS INSTITUTE
Human Systems Architecture

October 17, 2026

Abstract

Good time, earned credits, and community placement operate under different legal authorities. Understanding those distinctions is necessary to identify the earliest placement available in an individual case without double counting benefits or treating a discretionary maximum as an entitlement. This explainer sets out those pathways and the limits of judicial review.

What the legal framework distinguishes

Mechanism	Function	Key distinction
Sentence computation and prior custody credit	Establish the federal sentence commencement and creditable detention	Prior custody generally cannot be credited twice. A sentencing date is not necessarily the commencement date in every case. [1]
Good Conduct Time (GCT)	Qualifying nonlife sentences over one year can receive up to 54 days per year of the sentence imposed, with the final partial year prorated	Discipline and applicable educational requirements matter. GCT is distinct from FSA credits. [2, 15]
FSA earned time credits	Eligible people earn 10 days per 30 days of qualifying participation; an additional five days requires minimum/low risk without an increase over two consecutive assessments	Earning, retaining, and applying credits are separate determinations. Statutory offense exclusions and restrictions apply. [3]
FSA application	Credits may support prerelease custody or up to 12 months of earlier supervised release, subject to requirements	RRC or home confinement remains BOP custody; supervised release is a different legal status. [2, 3]
Second Chance Act (SCA) placement	Individualized community reentry placement of up to 12 months, to the extent practicable	The maximum is not a guaranteed award, and 180 days is not the universal statutory maximum. [2]
Ordinary home confinement	Section 3624(c)(2) ordinarily limits this route to the shorter of six months or 10 percent of the imprisonment term	FSA prerelease custody operates under a separate authority whose time limits differ. [2]
RDAP	Eligible nonviolent participants may receive a discretionary sentence reduction of up to one year under section 3621(e)	This is a separate program with its own eligibility and completion rules; do not automatically add another year. [4]

An individualized placement assessment under section 3621(b) considers facility resources, offense circumstances, the person's history and characteristics, sentencing

court statements, and pertinent Sentencing Commission policy. A camp security designation, criminal history category, and PATTERN risk category answer different questions. [4]

Calculation safeguard: Do not calculate departure by simply subtracting maximum GCT, maximum projected FSA, 365 SCA days, and a home-confinement period from the original sentence. Home confinement is a placement setting, not another independent credit award. Projected credits depend on future qualifying status; credits used toward supervised release cannot be counted again as a second award toward prerelease custody.

Applying the authorities together

Mandatory duties and individualized discretion must be audited separately. Section 3632(d)(4)(C) directs transfer of eligible people as determined under section 3624(g); application depends on earned credits and statutory conditions. For FSA prerelease custody, the risk pathway generally requires the last two reassessments to be minimum/low, or an approved warden petition meeting statutory findings. Earlier supervised release has a different assessment requirement and a 12-month ceiling. Section 3624(g)(11) separately requires sufficient prerelease capacity. By contrast, SCA placement is individualized and qualified by practicability. [2, 3]

The legal assessment must resolve two questions: Was an applicable FSA duty fulfilled? Was SCA discretion exercised individually using the proper criteria? A reason for limiting discretionary SCA placement does not automatically resolve an FSA application question.

Limits of judicial enforcement: Mandatory statutory wording does not establish a uniformly enforceable right to transfer on a particular date. Courts disagree about placement discretion and judicial review. Statutory text, a policy position, and an available judicial remedy must be distinguished.

September 30, 2026 regulation. BOP removed the designated-facility arrival restriction in 28 CFR 523.42(a). Eligibility to begin earning is tied to sentence commencement. The rule expressly cautions that sentencing alone does not automatically create credits: qualifying assigned programming or productive activities remain required. Review post-sentence transit periods individually; do not presume a blanket retroactive award or an automatic 15-day rate. [5]

Agency implementation is examined in Article 2. The June 2025 announcement describes cumulative FSA/SCA use and conditional referrals; the July task force announcement acknowledges processing and date problems. GAO also identifies data weaknesses. These implementation records explain why a legally correct calculation must be paired with an auditable placement process. [6, 7, 8]

Litigation and judicial review

Selected judicial decisions

In Woodley, a Kansas district court ordered transfer within 30 days. Its later enforcement order recorded transfer to a Florida RRC and denied a request for Virginia home confinement. Even the favorable transfer ruling left the placement setting and location to BOP. [12, pp. 1–3]

In Osorio-Calderon, the Eighth Circuit affirmed dismissal on June 30, 2026, reasoning that § 3621(b) prevented review of the challenged placement decision despite the FSA transfer language. Housing suitability and location restrictions formed part of the record. This is adverse circuit authority on reviewability, not a holding that earned credits have no legal significance. It is not Fourth Circuit precedent. [13, pp. 5–10]

Bonnie, a published Fourth Circuit decision, upheld FSA ineligibility where the aggregate sentence included a disqualifying conviction; Judge Wynn dissented. The eligibility holding concerns a different question from the timing of an otherwise eligible person's placement. A camp designation alone did not resolve eligibility. [14, majority pp. 3–17]

These selected decisions illustrate different legal questions and jurisdictional limits. They are not an exhaustive case survey or a substitute for checking later history when preparing a filing.

Judicial review in Maxwell v Dinis

The Supreme Court granted review in Maxwell v. Dinis, No. 25-5930, on June 1, 2026, limited to whether FSA-credit claims seeking accelerated RRC or home-confinement transfer may be brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. The official docket schedules argument for November 2, 2026 and records an October 13 divided-argument order. As checked October 17, the docket does not show a merits ruling. [10, June 1, August 11, and October 13 entries]

The government's August 5 brief argues for habeas cognizability but separately argues that Maxwell's claim fails for lack of administrative exhaustion and because section 3621(b) bars review of placement decisions. It requests vacatur/remand, with dismissal of review suggested as an alternative. Do not describe this as government agreement that Maxwell must be transferred. [11, printed pp. 14–16, 25–26, 35–42]

Implication: Distinguish four questions: the appropriate procedural vehicle, any independent restriction on review, satisfaction of administrative requirements, and actual placement entitlement. A favorable answer to the first does not resolve the remaining questions. Maxwell is not a Butner case and does not currently supersede any adverse authority discussed above.

For the Institute's reform work, this creates a separate accountability question: What timely correction mechanism is available when a calculation or placement decision is disputed? The answer requires analysis of administrative correction, judicial review limits, and institutional oversight as distinct mechanisms. This research does not advise any individual to bypass remedies or postpone a filing while awaiting Maxwell.

Requesting an individual correction

Request a current sentence computation, detailed FSA record, risk/needs assessments, the individualized SCA decision, the conditional placement date and assumptions, referral status, and the written reason for any barrier. Ask which office owns the next step and when it will be reviewed. Preserve dated requests and responses.

BOP's administrative remedy framework ordinarily proceeds through informal resolution, a BP-9 to the warden, BP-10 regional appeal, and BP-11 central appeal. Ordinarily, informal resolution and the initial BP-9 must be completed within 20 calendar days after the event giving rise to the request. The BP-10 is due within 20 calendar days of the date the warden signed the response, and the BP-11 within 30 calendar days of the date the regional director signed the response. Extensions and exceptions can apply. [9, §§ 542.13–542.15]

An Institute audit, congressional inquiry, or policy complaint is distinct from an individual's administrative remedy. A specific legal challenge to credit application or continued custody requires case-specific legal assessment; this article does not determine anyone's release date.

Response periods and unanswered remedies

Under 28 CFR § 542.18, ordinary response periods are 20 calendar days at the institution, 30 at the regional level and 40 at Central Office. Written extensions may add 20, 30 or 20 days, respectively. If no response arrives within the applicable response period, including an extension, the absence may be treated as a denial at that level. Special and emergency rules also apply. These response periods are separate from a person's filing deadlines. [9, § 542.18]

Conclusion

A defensible earliest-placement assessment begins with the actual sentence and credit record, identifies the authority that permits placement and tests the conditions for using it. It keeps projected credits separate from credits already earned, and distinguishes a mandatory duty from an individualized placement judgment. The resulting decision should be understandable enough to correct an error or identify the question requiring legal review.

This is a dated legal synthesis rather than an individual release determination. Article 2 follows the implementation record, and Article 3 proposes the controls needed to make decisions traceable.

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[1] U.S. House of Representatives. 18 U.S.C. § 3585, Calculation of a term of imprisonment, § 3585(a)–(b). https://uscode.house.gov/us/usc/119-118/t18/s3585/

[2] U.S. House of Representatives. 18 U.S.C. § 3624, Release of a prisoner, § 3624(b), (c)(1)–(2), (c)(6), and (g)(1)–(3), (10)–(11). https://uscode.house.gov/us/usc/119-118/t18/s3624/

[3] U.S. House of Representatives. 18 U.S.C. § 3632, Development of risk and needs assessment system, § 3632(d)(4)(A)–(E). https://uscode.house.gov/us/usc/119-118/t18/s3632/

[4] U.S. House of Representatives. 18 U.S.C. § 3621, Imprisonment of a convicted person, § 3621(b) and (e)(2)(B). https://uscode.house.gov/us/usc/119-118/t18/s3621/

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[7] Federal Bureau of Prisons. (2025, July 14). Director Marshall launches FSA Task Force. https://www.bop.gov/news/20250714-director-marshall-launches-fsa-task-force.jsp

[8] U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2026, January 27). Federal prisons: Improvements needed to the system used to assess and mitigate incarcerated people's recidivism risk (GAO-26-107268). Sections on prerelease custody (Figure 13), program data, and Bureau-wide implementation; Appendix I on methods. https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-26-107268/index.html

[9] Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. 28 CFR part 542, Administrative remedy, §§ 542.13–542.18. Current text reviewed October 17, 2026. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-28/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-542

[10] Supreme Court of the United States. Maxwell v. Dinis, No. 25-5930, official docket. Entries June 1, August 11, and October 13, 2026. https://www.supremecourt.gov/docket/docketfiles/html/public/25-5930.html

[11] United States. (2026, August 5). Brief for respondent supporting vacatur, Maxwell v. Dinis, No. 25-5930. Printed pp. 14–16, 25–26, 35–42. https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/25/25-5930/418232/20260805174545194_25-5930UnitedStates.pdf

[12] Woodley v. Warden, USP Leavenworth, No. 24-3053-JWL (D. Kan. Oct. 3, 2024), memorandum and order, pp. 1–3 (describing the May 15 transfer order and subsequent RRC transfer). https://ecf.ksd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/show_public_doc?2024cv3053-16=

[13] Osorio-Calderon v. Warden, FCI Sandstone, No. 25-3090 (8th Cir. June 30, 2026), opinion, pp. 5–10. Judicial opinion reproduced by Justia; reliance is on the opinion text rather than its editorial summary. https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/ca8/25-3090/25-3090-2026-06-30.html

[14] Bonnie v. Warden Dunbar, No. 24-6665 (4th Cir. Nov. 5, 2025), published opinion, majority pp. 3–17; dissent pp. 18–33. https://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/opinions/246665.P.pdf

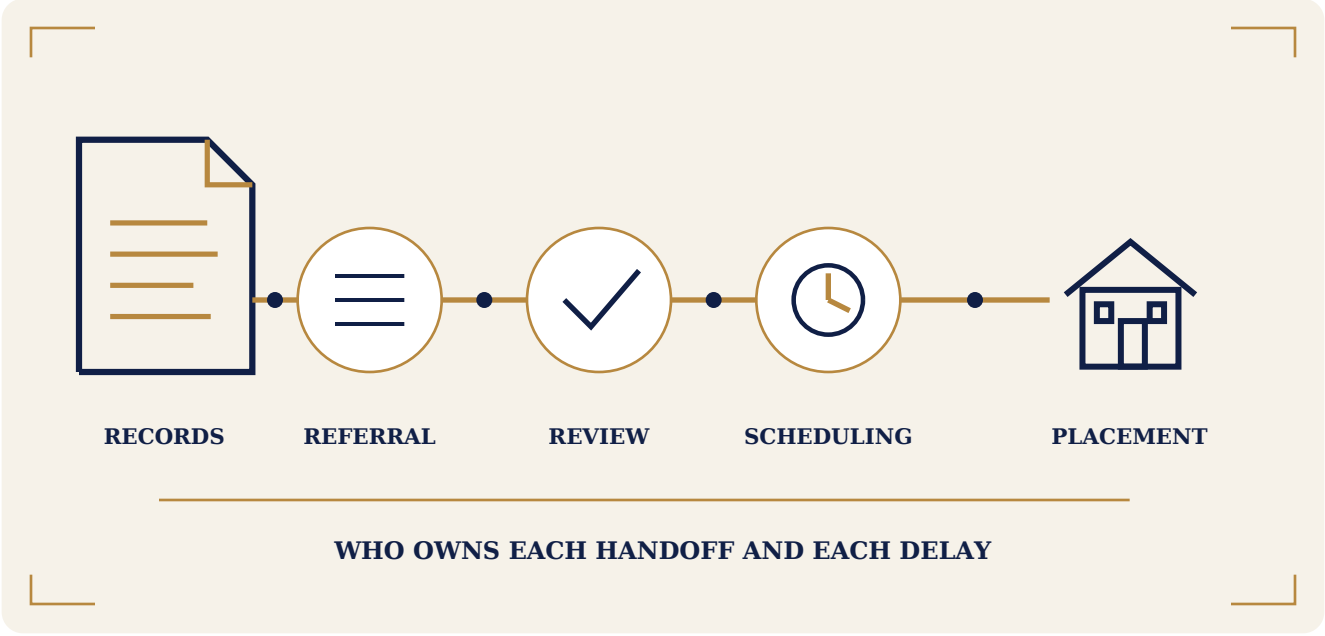
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ARTICLE 02 / DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

When Earned Credits Do Not Become Placement

National oversight findings and implementation history



Earned credits must move through an accountable process

THE STARLINGS INSTITUTE
Human Systems Architecture

October 17, 2026

Abstract

This targeted documentary review examines federal statutes, an interim final regulation, two GAO reports, one DOJ Inspector General evaluation, and dated BOP public announcements. It is a policy synthesis rather than a systematic literature review or original audit. Oversight results retain their original cohorts and review periods. No interviews, confidential case files, or facility comparison dataset underlie these findings.

Principal findings

National oversight documents substantial weaknesses in credit records, eligibility tracking, and placement administration. This brief examines those documented problems and the sequence of BOP corrective announcements. It supports an investigation of preventable delay while distinguishing national findings from allegations about any individual institution.

National findings and their implications

GAO's January 2026 review found that 21,190 of 29,934 eligible people in BOP facilities on March 30, 2024 who could have transferred during March 31–December 31, 2024 did not receive application of all earned prerelease credits. This is about that cohort, not 71 percent of everyone in BOP. It also documented inconsistent program-refusal coding between facilities and inaccurate participation and waitlist information. Program waitlists do not automatically stop earning under BOP's earning-status approach, although lack of programming can impede risk reduction. [6]

GAO's February 2026 report found BOP lacked readily available eligibility dates needed to identify overdue transfers and did not adequately know its RRC/home-confinement capacity needs. It also linked contractor payment problems to operational difficulties. Its findings justify examining the entire placement chain rather than attributing every delay to the institution case manager. These historical findings do not establish the condition of every facility today. [7]

Evidence boundary: Federal findings establish implementation failures and inconsistent practices. They do not, by themselves, establish race, disability, or facility discrimination in a particular decision. That requires comparable case records and analysis of legitimate eligibility differences.

Changes in instructions create an additional audit question. BOP announced on April 10, 2025 that it rescinded its planned 60-day SCA placement restriction. Later guidance emphasized cumulative FSA/SCA authorities and appropriate home confinement. A decision must be evaluated against the version in force when it was made; identical durations do not establish identical reasoning. The discussion below documents the policy sequence and the limits of the records obtained. [4, 13]

Program access belongs in the system analysis. The May 2026 Inspector General evaluation identified program-delivery and data weaknesses. Its completion statistics should not be treated as findings that credits were unlawfully earned. The discussion below identifies the report and the upstream questions it raises. [14]

Judicial review is a separate accountability route. The status of Maxwell and the government's position are examined in Article 1. A pending procedural case does not establish that a particular placement must occur. [15, 16]

Policy history and oversight sources

Article 1 explains the statutory boundaries: FSA credit application and discretionary SCA placement require separate analysis. This article asks whether the information and workflow needed to act under those authorities are functioning. [1, 2]

The September 30, 2026 rule removed the designated-facility arrival restriction. Sentence commencement and qualifying participation must still be examined individually; Article 1 explains the legal distinction. [3]

The June 2025 announcement describes cumulative FSA/SCA use, conditional referrals and appropriate home confinement despite RRC bed limits. The July announcement acknowledges processing and date problems. These dated statements guide the documentary inquiry; they do not prove implementation in every institution. [4, 5]

Older FAQ pages and older program statements should be checked against later regulations and directives. Publication date and effective date belong in the audit record.

Agency announcement timeline

Date	Public material located	Relevance and limitation
May 28, 2025	Home-confinement expansion announcement [8]	Emphasizes earliest statutory placement for appropriate eligible people, especially those not needing RRC transition services; announcement rather than the complete internal directive
June 17, 2025	FSA/SCA implementation announcement [4]	Stacking, conditional dates, and appropriate home confinement despite RRC bed constraints
July 14, 2025	FSA Task Force announcement [5]	Acknowledges date/system and processing problems; describes corrective assistance
August 1, 2025	Director's message on tools and training [9]	Announces updated Time Credit Application Program and staff training for combined conditional home-confinement dates
October 21, 2025	FCPD classification/designation announcement [10]	Directs use of conditional placement dates in key management decisions; not proof of a completed individual referral
May 28, 2026	Camp utilization announcement [11]	Announces transitional camp transfers for eligible people with RRC/HC dates; camp custody is not community placement
August 31 / September 30, 2026	Published/effective dates of credit regulation [3]	Actual regulatory text, distinct from an announcement or proposed bill

Date	Public material located	Relevance and limitation
September 24, 2026	Dedicated FSA Office announcement [12]	Announces centralized oversight including credit administration, guidance, resources, and compliance; not evidence that all earlier defects are resolved

Rescission of the proposed 60 day SCA limit

BOP's April 10, 2025 announcement states that it would not proceed with the planned limitation of SCA RRC placement to 60 days and that a new memorandum rescinded the March 31 guidance. The supersession event is verified; the complete rescinding memorandum has not been retrieved. [13, announcement body]

Implication: A later explanation invoking that withdrawn instruction should be checked against the rescission and any subsequent authority. A 60-day individualized decision is not, merely because it has that duration, proof that the withdrawn blanket limit was used. Ask for the actual instruction and reasons supporting the decision. The source does not establish use of that withdrawn policy in a particular institution.

Historical home confinement guidance

The May 24, 2013 memorandum, “Guidance for Home Confinement and Residential Reentry Center Placements,” is available on BOP's website. Its first pages emphasize individualized assessments and limited RRC resources, while identifying home confinement as preferred for appropriate low-need/low-risk people. This demonstrates that home-confinement prioritization did not originate in 2025. It predates FSA and cannot establish current FSA credit application rules. [17, pp. 1–3]

Historical guidance requires a supersession check before operational use. The 2013 memorandum is background evidence, not a current FSA implementation standard.

Auditing changes in operating instructions

For each reviewed placement decision, require a traceable record of:

1. Decision date and controlling instruction's title, date, and version.

2. Whether the instruction was operative on that date, withdrawn, amended, or superseded.

3. Date the institution received the replacement instruction and how staff were informed.

4. Whether worksheets, calculator defaults, checklists, and training were updated.

5. Whether pending cases affected by the old instruction were reconsidered.

6. The person's individualized reasons, distinguished from a blanket duration rule.

Testable hypothesis: Some variation may result from uneven implementation of changing instructions. Evidence supporting it would include a dated decision explicitly applying a withdrawn rule, or a demonstrably stale calculation default affecting that decision. Evidence against it would include a current instruction, individualized reasons, and a calculation consistent with both. Different placement lengths alone

cannot distinguish these explanations.

Recommended Institute reform: Maintain one accessible register of operative placement instructions, identify superseded documents clearly, and automatically review pending cases when an instruction changes. This is a proposed control, not a verified current Bureau-wide practice.

Additional Inspector General evaluation

The May 2026 evaluation assessed FSA funding and implementation. Its executive summary identifies staffing, instructional-space and lockdown barriers, unreliable program data, and financial-control weaknesses. It reports that 24 percent (9,819 of 41,548) of the reviewed FY 2022–2024 FSA early-release group had completed no FSA program. That is not proof they unlawfully earned credits or never participated in productive activities. The report made seven recommendations. [14, executive summary pp. i–iii; program findings pp. 24–26]

Relevance: The Institute should examine the relationship between program access, earning records, risk reduction, and the eventual ability to apply credits. This is a system-wide oversight source, not evidence that Butner camp committed each identified failure. It adds an upstream dimension to the placement study: equal processing alone may not produce equitable access if people encounter different opportunities to address assessed needs.

Proposed study extension: Compare announced program availability with actual offerings, enrollment and waitlist records, accommodations, completion opportunities, and the explanations given for non-earning periods. Keep credit earning and program completion distinct. Where risk affects application, investigate access to opportunities for risk reduction without presuming that any one program necessarily changes a score or guarantees placement.

Limits and next evidence

A current assessment requires operative instructions, calculation specifications, dated referral records and evidence of subsequent corrections. The cited historical findings do not establish a current national discrimination or facility compliance rate.

What the findings imply for system design

The national findings point to three different problems: incomplete or inconsistent information, failures to plan and complete transfers, and constraints on programming or community placement. A single explanation such as bed capacity cannot be assumed to account for all three. Each reviewed case needs a dated account of the actual barrier and the office able to address it. [6, 7, 14]

This distinction determines the corrective response. A calculation error calls for reconciliation of records. A stalled handoff calls for an acknowledged referral and an accountable decision. A housing or care barrier calls for a suitable placement plan and support. Article 3 turns these diagnostic questions into proposed controls; Article 4 specifies how to test their effects. None of those proposals demonstrates present compliance or noncompliance at a particular institution.

References

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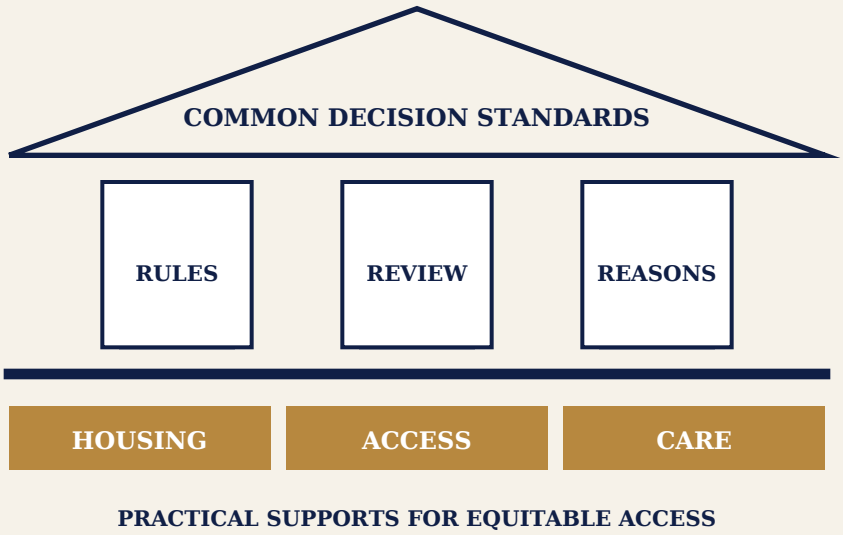
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ARTICLE 03 / POLICY PROPOSAL

Consistent Rules Equitable Access

Proposed standards for federal prerelease placement



Consistent decisions require practical access and support

THE STARLINGS INSTITUTE
Human Systems Architecture

October 17, 2026

Abstract

Starlings Institute proposes a common administrative standard so legally available community placement is not lost through preventable delay. The proposed system pairs understandable calculations and written decisions with accountable referrals, early preparation, and support for people who lack housing or other resources. The standards below are proposals for evaluation and costing, not existing nationwide legal deadlines.

Reform priorities tied to evidence

The controls below are proposals for testing and evaluation.

Documented problem	Proposed control and measure
Eligibility dates not readily available [3]	Maintain a dated eligibility and overdue-transfer register. Measure traceable dates and unresolved overdue days.
Inconsistent coding and unreliable records [2]	Audit earning and refusal codes; explain corrections. Measure error frequency and time to correction.
Changed or withdrawn instructions [5]	Keep current instructions and review affected pending decisions. Measure implementation time and cases rechecked.
Capacity and support barriers [3]	Document alternatives and coordinate housing or care. Measure barrier duration, alternatives considered and placement stability.

The standards below specify proposed pilot deadlines and accessible decision notices. The companion methods toolkit Measuring Prerelease Placement Fairness supplies the research and comparison standards needed to test whether these changes improve equal treatment and equitable access.

Equality and equitable access

Equality: People with materially similar legal eligibility and circumstances should receive the same calculation rules, review opportunities, and decision standards. Different staff preferences should not become different eligibility rules.

Equity: A common process should provide the additional support needed to make access real. A person without family housing may need housing navigation; a person with a disability may need accessible placement and coordinated care; someone with limited literacy may need help understanding a calculation and challenging an error.

The Institute should test whether a policy favoring stable housing improves safe placement while unintentionally disadvantaging people who lack family resources. The remedy should include obtaining suitable housing and support, alongside appropriate review of direct home confinement for those with approved residences.

Public-safety differences can justify different placement conditions. Administrative convenience should not be accepted as an unexplained substitute for a documented individualized decision.

Process ownership and proposed service standards

A useful control follows responsibility across the calculation, institutional recommendation, receiving-office review, contractor acceptance and actual movement. The responsible functions must be confirmed against operative instructions before assigning individual accountability. Article 4 and Appendix A supply the detailed questions and records for tracing those decisions.

Decision ownership and evidence of handoffs

BOP's public RRC description identifies the unit team recommendation, warden approval, RRM review, contractor acceptance decision, and coordination of a placement date. This is a baseline workflow; newer FSA/direct-home-confinement instructions must be checked before treating it as exhaustive. [4]

Actor	Role supported by public descriptions	Record the audit should obtain
Institution unit team	Recommends suitability and duration; communicates placement outcome [4]	Dated recommendation, supporting factors, referral transmission, notice to person
Warden	Approves institutional referral recommendation [4]	Approval, return, or denial with date and reason
DSCC / designated computation personnel	BOP's 2025 task force assisted with identifying and correcting placement dates [1]	Calculation version, inputs, correction request, resolution; verify ordinary responsibility separately
Residential Reentry Management office	Reviews and forwards referrals; coordinates proposed placement dates with contractor [4]	Receipt, completeness review, forwarding, date modification and reason
RRC contractor	Assesses needs and accepts or denies the referred placement [4]	Acceptance/denial, capacity and service assessment, proposed alternative
Community supervision and service partners	Role depends on placement authority and local arrangements	Residence verification, monitoring availability, care coordination, outstanding requirements; verify who can approve each item

For every handoff, collect both the sending timestamp and receiving acknowledgment. An institution's statement that a packet was sent does not establish that the receiving office had a complete packet. A contractor's refusal should trigger review of the reason and alternatives; the contractor's operational decision must be distinguished from BOP's legal obligations.

1. **Readable records and correction:** Give the person the computation inputs, earned and projected credit distinction, assessment history, applicable placement authority and an explanation of corrections.

2. **Accountable handoffs:** Assign a case owner, record referral receipt, consolidate missing information and identify who controls the next decision.

3. **Supported placement:** Assess appropriate home confinement separately; address housing, accessibility, care and transport barriers with documented alternatives.

4. **Visible oversight:** Maintain an overdue-case register, escalate unresolved barriers and publish aggregate timeliness measures with eligibility and case-mix explanations.

Proposed service standards for a pilot

The following calendar-day targets are Institute design proposals for testing and costing. A pilot must establish staffing, caseload, monitoring, and escalation capacity before adoption. They are not current legal deadlines, permission to postpone a transfer already due, or substitutes for administrative remedy filing requirements.

Trigger	Proposed response and responsible function
New calculation question or material date change	The named case owner acknowledges within 3 days and provides a calculation or unresolved-input explanation within 10 days, with the computation contact identified.
Receiving office gets a referral	Within 5 days, record receipt and provide one consolidated list of missing items.
Complete referral	Within 15 days, the decision maker issues a decision or written status identifying external dependencies and the next action.
Expected eligibility within 30 days	Institution and receiving office review unresolved housing, monitoring, care and transport needs at least weekly using one action record.
Person appears eligible but remains in the institution	Flag immediately. A supervisor reviews within 2 days; the case owner provides updates at least twice weekly and records the authority, disputed inputs and corrective action.
Denial or postponement	Communicate a written reason and review route, distinguishing legal restrictions, individualized judgment, missing information and capacity.

The pilot should assess whether these targets shorten avoidable delays without weakening review quality. Never restart the entire processing clock for a minor correction. Record the total elapsed time and each office's portion.

Minimum decision notice

Every proposed notice should state: the legal authority evaluated; earned and projected credits separately; SCA duration considered and approved; direct home-confinement determination; remaining requirements; reasons and evidence for denial or delay; the responsible office; next review date; and available correction procedures. Accessible explanations and assistance should accompany the notice where needed.

Records needed for implementation

Obtain the underlying 2025 directives, superseding memoranda, current training and calculation specifications, referral forms, home-confinement criteria, contractor service requirements, and relevant regional/local instructions. Request deidentified records of referrals returned as incomplete, date changes, contractor denials, overdue transfers, and corrective actions. Record the date range and missing data. These requests are proposed; this proposal does not report that those records have been obtained.

Priorities and implementation sequence

The first priority is a reliable record and an accountable owner for an apparently overdue case. Housing support and community capacity must be developed alongside that control, so improved processing does not benefit only people with private resources.

A proposed pilot can use three planning stages. These are research and management milestones, not legal waiting periods or permission to delay a transfer already due.

Stage 1 Establish a baseline. During a proposed first 30 days, the policy sponsor confirms authority, staffing and information access. Computation and reentry functions agree on date definitions, resolve conflicting records, map handoffs and identify accommodation and housing resources. Record existing performance before changing the process.

Stage 2 Test the controls. During a proposed following 60 days, participating teams use receipt acknowledgments, consolidated deficiency notices, decision explanations and escalation. A supervisor reviews overdue cases; housing and care partners record what support was offered. The sponsor tracks staff time and costs as well as elapsed days.

Stage 3 Evaluate and revise. During a proposed following 30 days, compare outcomes with the baseline and a contemporaneous comparison group where feasible. Examine legal eligibility, case mix and concurrent policy changes before attributing a result to the pilot. Report delay distributions, missing data, corrections, housing barriers and placement stability. Revise or stop controls that create additional delay or unequal access.

Decision to expand. Expansion should depend on evidence that the process produces more accurate decisions and fewer avoidable delays without reducing individualized review, accessibility or support for people lacking resources. The sponsor should publish aggregate findings and the limits of the comparison. Faster processing alone does not establish lawful or equitable placement.

Scope and use

The proposed standards require implementation planning and evaluation. They do not change statutory eligibility, replace individualized decisions, or extend administrative-remedy deadlines.

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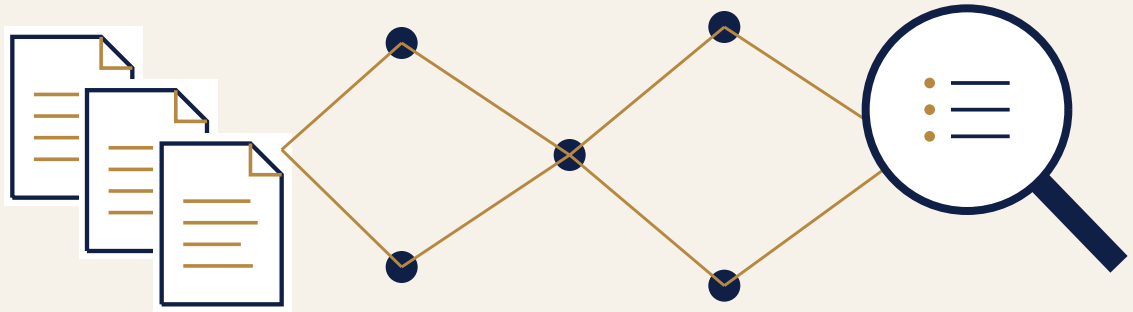
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ARTICLE 04 / RESEARCH METHODS

Measuring Prerelease Placement Fairness

A research method for comparable cases and accountable workflows



Comparable cases make differences possible to investigate

THE STARLINGS INSTITUTE
Human Systems Architecture

October 17, 2026

Abstract

A credible assessment of placement fairness must compare people with materially similar legal eligibility and circumstances, reconstruct dated decisions, and test alternative explanations. This toolkit specifies the evidence streams, comparison safeguards, outcome measures, and evidence classifications needed to carry out that work. It does not report completed interviews or statistical findings.

Operationalizing equal treatment and equitable access

Article 3 distinguishes consistent decision standards from the additional support needed to use them. This study should test both. Compare calculation and review practices among legally comparable people, then examine whether housing, disability access, literacy or care needs affect the practical ability to reach community placement. A disparity is a reason to investigate its mechanism; it does not by itself establish intent or illegality.

Human outcomes to investigate

The Institute should measure what placement timing means for people's lives, alongside processing performance. The following are research questions and proposed measures, not established findings from this review:

Domain	Question	Evidence to seek
Parenting and family	Did a delay disrupt a documented caregiving or reunification plan?	Planned and actual arrangements, caregiver accounts, approved contact opportunities
Education	Did timing affect enrollment, access to study, or completion?	Enrollment windows, institutional access requirements, approved study plans, actual participation
Employment	Did a documented opportunity remain available when placement occurred?	Offer dates, start windows, placement conditions, actual start dates
Housing	Did a proposed residence remain available through processing?	Verification dates, duration of availability, reasons for loss or rejection
Health and disability	Were treatment, medication, accessible housing, and needed supports coordinated?	Dated referrals and care plans, documented gaps, participant accounts with appropriate authorization
Family resources	What costs or additional responsibilities fell on caregivers?	Voluntarily supplied travel, housing, childcare, and communication records

Community placement can also impose burdens through monitoring, restrictions, fees, transportation requirements, or limited services. Assess placement quality and stability as well as speed. Do not assume that a faster transfer automatically improves every outcome or that observed difficulties were caused solely by delay.

Following a case through the system

Human Systems Architecture connects the governing rule, the information used, the office making a decision and its consequences for the person. Five recurring audit pathways illustrate how to apply that approach. These are hypotheses to test, not completed findings.

Disputed credit start date. Verify sentence commencement and applicable earning requirements, reconcile calculation inputs and identify the computation owner. Measure any change in the supported date and the time needed for correction. [1, 5]

Disputed refusal code. Compare the recommendation, notice, refusal evidence and code history. Determine whether the code affected earning or the person's understanding of the record, and whether a correction was warranted. [8]

Stalled referral. Compare transmission, receipt, completeness and action timestamps. Identify the office able to take the next step, and test whether the interval affected a documented housing, education or employment opportunity. [11]

No RRC bed. Determine the governing placement authority, whether appropriate direct home confinement was considered, and what monitoring or service constraint remained. Record alternatives and the actual reason for continued institutional custody. [2, 6]

No approved residence. Obtain applicable residence criteria, rejection reasons and the record of assistance. Examine whether housing navigation or another suitable placement could address the barrier; do not infer that the absence of family housing is a legal disqualification by itself.

Primary question: After accounting for legally relevant differences, how much does timely community placement vary by facility, region, staff workflow, and access to community resources?

Use three evidence streams:

- **Authority review:** Statutes, current regulations, dated program statements, May/June 2025 directives and superseding instructions, training materials, and relevant court decisions. Distinguish statutory requirements, agency policy, local practice, and proposed reform.

- **Deidentified case review:** Collect dated calculations, assessment histories, credit records, SCA decisions, referrals, acceptance dates, housing decisions, actual transfer dates, and reasons for changes. Begin with a feasibility sample across facilities and expand only after testing data quality.

- **Process interviews:** People in custody and community custody, families, case managers, DSCC personnel, RRM staff, contractors, probation personnel, and counsel. Compare accounts with documents. Do not treat recollections as verified case outcomes.

Any direct research involving incarcerated participants should undergo appropriate ethics and institutional review before recruitment. Keep participation voluntary and separate research from promises of placement assistance. Do not publish identifiable sentence or family records without appropriate authorization.

Core data fields: deidentified case identifier; institution and region; sentence/commencement dates; controlling conviction provisions; GCT; FSA eligibility and earning intervals; risk/needs assessments; projected and earned credits; legal restrictions; individualized SCA duration; housing readiness; referral and receipt dates; requests for missing information; acceptance; scheduled and actual movement; delay reason; responsible office; and correction outcome. Sensitive demographic/disability fields should be collected only when justified and protected.

Track three separate dates:

Maintain a separate **conditional placement projection** alongside these dates. It uses assumptions about future credit accrual and placement authority to prepare referrals. Record its creation date, assumptions, subsequent changes, and author. It is neither proof that all projected credits have already been earned nor a guarantee that the placement has been approved. [6]

Date	Proposed meaning
Earliest authorized eligibility	Earliest date supported by applicable legal requirements and documented case assumptions, without changing it merely because capacity is unavailable
Placement readiness	Date needed residence, services, documents, and supervision arrangements are complete
Actual transfer	Date the person physically enters RRC or home confinement

Proposed measures: eligibility-to-transfer days; readiness-to-transfer days; referral turnaround; percentage of decisions with a written explanation; correction time; unused applicable credits; SCA duration distribution; direct-home-confinement consideration rate; housing-related delays; and assessment timeliness.

Report medians and upper-tail delays, sample sizes, missing data, and uncertainty. Compare like cases within eligibility categories. An adjusted disparity is a reason to investigate; it is not automatic proof of intent or illegality. Do not hide capacity delays by redefining the eligibility date as the first available bed date.

For SCA, distinguish the earliest date permitted by the statutory ceiling from the date resulting from the person's individualized approved duration. Report both when available. Calling the maximum possible SCA window an unconditional entitlement would distort the delay measure. For FSA, separately record earned-credit application eligibility and a future projection. Record disputes about eligibility as disputes rather than silently selecting the agency's or participant's preferred date.

Evidence classification and individual correction

Classify each claim before interpreting it. Statutes and regulations establish governing requirements; judicial decisions address the questions actually decided; oversight reports support findings within their study populations; agency announcements describe dated policy positions. Institute proposals require testing, and facility-specific allegations require comparative case evidence. Appendix B provides the source register using this article's reference numbers. [1–11]

A study does not replace an individual's correction or appeal process. Article 1 sets out ordinary filing and response periods, with extensions and exceptions. Preserve calculation statements, dated requests, responses and explanations of unresolved barriers. [10]

Review standard: Each future finding should cite the governing provision and dated source pages, disclose missing evidence and contrary accounts, and receive an independent check appropriate to its legal and methodological claims. This toolkit is an instrument; it does not certify any completed case finding.

Next research product: A comparative case-and-workflow study with a defined period, sampling method, documented eligibility rules, verified timestamps, missing-data disclosure, and review of contrary evidence. It should distinguish a statutory restriction, an individualized placement decision, a correctable administrative error, and a resource barrier. A finding of unequal implementation should explain which comparable cases were treated differently and which documented process accounts for that difference.

Case selection and unfinished cases

Specify the cohort entry window and follow-up end date before comparing outcomes. Include pending, denied and returned referrals as well as completed transfers; selecting only successful transfers can conceal the cases with the longest unresolved barriers. Report the number eligible to earn credits, eligible to apply credits, referred, accepted and transferred, using a stated denominator for each rate.

For a case still pending at the end of follow-up, report the time observed and its unresolved status. Do not enter zero delay, assign an invented transfer date or exclude it without explanation. Any estimate of time to transfer should account for unfinished observation; otherwise describe the analysis as a summary of completed cases and report the pending group separately.

Compare cases under the same legal pathway and policy period. Present unadjusted patterns alongside comparisons accounting for legally relevant differences. When housing resources are part of the access question, report results by housing circumstances as well; controlling away that difference could conceal the mechanism being investigated. A small feasibility sample can identify processes to examine but cannot establish a national rate.

Coding and independent checks

Use a written codebook and have a second reviewer independently classify a subset of records. Resolve disagreements against the source documents, preserve both the original and revised coding, and report the extent of missing or disputed information. This is a proposed quality check for future research, not a statement that independent review of this edition has occurred.

Instruments and reporting

Appendix A contains ten operational instruments for intake, calculation inputs, event chronology, date definitions, barrier coding, comparison criteria, interviews, human outcomes, findings and study deliverables. They should be piloted for clarity, completeness and consistent coding before a larger study. They have not been validated through original field research.

A completed report should distinguish an error that can be corrected, an individualized judgment, a resource barrier and a contested interpretation of law. It should explain the mechanism behind any observed difference, report missing evidence and contrary accounts, and state what the comparison cannot establish.

References

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Appendix A Operational research instruments

These instruments support Article 4. They are ready for adaptation and piloting, not validated measures or completed findings. Use a separate copy for each case or event as needed. Keep identity keys outside the research dataset, preserve source records and leave unknown fields explicitly unresolved. An approved research process and appropriate protections must precede recruitment or collection of sensitive records.

Instrument 1 Case intake

Assign an anonymous research ID. Keep any identity key separately with restricted access. Record the institution and housing unit at the time of each disputed action, not merely the facility listed when the case was filed.

Field	Entry
Research ID	
Review period	
Facility / unit / camp	
Transfer history relevant to dispute	
Release destination / responsible RRM office	
Record source and date received	
Participant account available?	
Documents missing	
Reviewer / review date	

Instrument 2 Calculation and eligibility inputs

Enter only information needed for the research question. Use exact conviction provisions rather than broad labels such as “nonviolent.” Do not infer PATTERN risk from security classification or criminal history category.

Input	Documented value	Source and date	Disputed or incomplete?
Sentence imposed and aggregation			
Sentence commencement			
Prior-custody credit			

Input	Documented value	Source and date	Disputed or incomplete?
GCT calculation / disciplinary adjustment			
FSA eligibility determination and reason			
Initial and subsequent risk assessments			
Qualifying participation / earning status			
10-day / 15-day earning periods			
Non-earning periods and reasons			
Credits earned, lost, restored, and applied			
Credits allocated toward supervised release			
Projected future credits and assumptions			
SCA duration considered and approved			
Detainer, removal order, or other restriction			
Other program benefit affecting calculation			

Separate an agency's determination from the reviewer's assessment of whether that determination is supported. If the legal effect is uncertain, mark it for legal review rather than treating it as an established restriction.

Instrument 3 Event timeline

Create one row per event. Keep the date an action occurred separate from the date it was entered in a system or communicated to the person.

Event date	Event and actors	Evidence and open action

For each event also record the recorded or communicated date, sending actor, receiving actor, and next action in the case record.

Events to capture: assessment; credit calculation or correction; SCA review; conditional projection; residence submission/verification; referral creation/transmission/receipt; deficiency notice; corrected packet; acceptance/denial; placement-date revision; transportation arrangement; actual departure; and administrative challenge/response.

Record every version of a placement date. A later date should not overwrite the earlier projection or the reason for revision.

Instrument 4 Date definitions

Date category	Entry rule
Conditional projection	Record the agency's anticipated date with calculation version and assumptions; do not treat it as a guaranteed departure
FSA application eligibility	Record the date claimed by each party and the date independently supported by reviewed records; flag unresolved law or inputs
SCA statutory window	Record the outer legal window separately from the approved individualized duration
Approved placement date	Record the actual approval, setting, conditions, and any subsequent change
Readiness date	Identify when each prerequisite was complete; distinguish prerequisites supported by governing authority from informal preferences
Actual transfer date	Physical departure into identified community custody; a camp-to-camp movement is not entered as community placement

If a date cannot be established, enter “unknown,” not zero. Report a range where justified, with its assumptions. Do not count the same credits twice.

Instrument 5 Barrier classification

Allow multiple barriers and identify overlapping periods. These categories organize evidence; none automatically establishes lawful or unlawful conduct.

Code	Category	Example of evidence needed
L	Legal eligibility or restriction	Controlling provision and case-specific determination
J	Individualized placement judgment	Factors considered, reasons, decision maker, alternatives
D	Data or computation problem	Competing assessments, code history, correction response
W	Workflow or handoff delay	Transmission, receipt, return, and completion timestamps
C	Community capacity	Dated capacity/monitoring response and alternatives considered
H	Housing or support barrier	Verification decision, recorded reason, assistance offered
M	Medical/disability coordination	Necessary accessible placement or continuity arrangements, without unnecessary clinical detail
T	Transportation or scheduling	Approved date, available transport, missed-movement reason
U	Unknown or disputed	Specific missing document or unresolved conflict

For each barrier record its start, end, owner, supporting evidence, disputed points, corrective step, and next review. An unanswered request establishes lack of a recorded response in the reviewed material; it does not establish the reason for silence.

Instrument 6 Compare materially similar cases

Build comparisons within the same placement authority. Do not compare an FSA-ineligible person receiving discretionary SCA consideration to an eligible person with applicable credits and call the resulting difference an implementation disparity without further analysis.

Match or account for:

- Applicable legal rules and policy period.
- Credit eligibility, earned amounts, assessment history, and relevant restrictions.
- Individualized reentry needs and approved housing/support arrangements.
- Release geography and actual service/monitoring availability.
- Relevant discipline and participation status.
- Completeness and timing of referrals.

Then test institution, unit, region, processing sequence, and local practice as possible explanations. Report differences in available records and uncertainty. A small convenience sample can identify mechanisms and leads; it cannot establish national prevalence.

Instrument 7 Neutral interview prompts

Use only within an appropriately authorized research process. Make participation voluntary and do not promise a placement outcome. Request documents with consent and avoid unnecessary identifying information.

For people experiencing the process and families:

1. What date were you first given, who gave it, and was it written or verbal?

2. What explanation did you receive about earned credits versus projected credits?

3. What changed, when did it change, and what written reason was provided?

4. What steps were you asked to complete, and when did you complete them?

5. Was RRC placement, home confinement, or both discussed? What explanation was given?

6. What education, employment, housing, care, or family arrangements changed during this period?

7. What records support your account, and what part remains uncertain?

For staff and placement partners:

8. Which information triggers a referral, and how do you confirm the calculation is current?

9. How are receipt, missing information, and date changes communicated between offices?

10. What criteria determine duration and setting, and where are reasons documented?

11. What happens when housing, monitoring, services, or bed capacity is unavailable?

12. Which problems can your office correct, and which require another office's approval?

13. What guidance is unclear or conflicting, and what records illustrate the problem?

14. What evidence would show that the process is working as intended?

Instrument 8 Human outcomes

Record documented changes in caregiving, enrollment, work opportunities, housing availability, care continuity, and family costs. Record the intended plan and actual outcome with dates. Identify alternative explanations and the person's own account of the significance. Do not assume a causal effect from timing alone.

Instrument 9 Findings template

Finding ID:
Question investigated:
Applicable authority and policy version:
Verified sequence, with source/page references:
Participant allegation:
Agency explanation:
Agreement and disagreement between accounts:
Comparison cases and relevant differences:
Human effect documented:
What the evidence supports:
What it does not establish:
Remaining records needed:
Corrective action proposed and responsible office:
Reviewer and independent check:

Before labeling a finding, distinguish an administrative error, an exercise of discretion, a resource barrier, and a disputed legal interpretation. Present contrary evidence and correct the finding if later records change it.

Instrument 10 First study deliverables

1. A dated authority register distinguishing statutes, regulations, agency instructions, announcements, and court decisions.

2. A deidentified timeline for each sufficiently documented case.

3. A comparison table showing relevant similarities and differences.

4. A barrier analysis assigning responsibility only where supported.

5. A findings brief with practical corrective actions, evidence limitations, and unanswered questions.

No cases have been scored with this toolkit. Its purpose is to make subsequent findings traceable and testable.

Appendix B Evidence register

This register supports Article 4. Bracketed references below refer to that article's reference list, not to the numbering in other articles. Each entry identifies what a source can support and the additional evidence needed before attributing a failure to a facility or decision maker.

Sentence commencement and prior custody credit

Evidence class: Statute. **Source:** [1], § 3585(a)–(b). **Use and limitation:** Governing calculation rules; individual inputs still require records.

GCT, SCA, and FSA prerelease framework

Evidence class: Statute. **Source:** [2], § 3624(b), (c), and (g); [3], § 3632(d)(4). **Use and limitation:** Legal framework; not an individual placement determination.

Individual placement factors and RDAP authority

Evidence class: Statute. **Source:** [4], § 3621(b), (e). **Use and limitation:** Relevant authority; program eligibility and exercise of discretion require separate review.

Removal of designated-facility arrival restriction

Evidence class: Regulation. **Source:** [5], Part I discussion and amendment to § 523.42(a). **Use and limitation:** Regulatory change; individual earning periods and implementation remain to be established.

Stacking and conditional placement policy

Evidence class: Agency public announcement. **Source:** [6], bullet points describing directive. **Use and limitation:** Public account of policy; obtain underlying memorandum and later instructions.

Incorrect dates and corrective task force

Evidence class: Agency public acknowledgment. **Source:** [7], discussion of system dates and task-force responsibilities. **Use and limitation:** Acknowledged problem and response in 2025; does not establish current resolution rates.

Unused earned credits and inconsistent coding

Evidence class: Federal oversight. **Source:** [8], sections on time-credit application and inaccurate program data. **Use and limitation:** Findings for reviewed records and periods; not a current census of every institution.

Eligibility visibility and capacity failures

Evidence class: Federal oversight. **Source:** [9], sections on eligibility tracking and prerelease capacity. **Use and limitation:** System-level deficiencies in review period; later corrective implementation needs verification.

Referral and acceptance workflow

Evidence class: Agency public description. **Source:** [11], “Inmate placement into a RRC”. **Use and limitation:** Baseline workflow; verify newer instructions and local application.

Service deadlines, notices, HSA measures, and remedies

Evidence class: Institute proposals. **Source:** the companion policy proposal and this methods toolkit. **Use and limitation:** Recommendations for testing; no claim of existing nationwide entitlement.

Butner-specific or other facility-specific unequal treatment

Evidence class: Unresolved empirical question. **Source:** Requires dated comparative case records. **Use and limitation:** No facility finding established by this desk review.

Conclusions and priorities for action

The evidence reviewed supports a national implementation question: how reliably does BOP turn applicable legal eligibility into timely, individualized placement? Oversight findings establish problems in the reviewed systems and periods. Agency announcements identify intended corrections. Neither source category, standing alone, proves that the corrective process now works consistently in a particular institution.

The volume's practical contribution is to make that question investigable. A case should have a supported calculation, a dated placement decision, an identifiable next action and a documented explanation of unresolved barriers. Researchers should connect those administrative facts to the person's actual circumstances rather than infer human outcomes from a projected date alone.

First priority Make the decision traceable

Obtain the current computation and the authority used, preserve earned and projected credits separately, and reconcile conflicting dates. Record when each office received a complete referral and what decision remained. A process owner should be identifiable even when another office controls the final action. These are proposed controls whose authority and feasibility must be confirmed during implementation.

Second priority Address practical access

A consistent review process can still produce unequal practical access if people lack approved housing, accessible services, identification or continuity of care. Document the support offered and the alternatives considered. Evaluate placement quality and stability alongside timing; an earlier movement alone is not sufficient evidence of an improved human outcome.

Third priority Test the correction

Use the pilot in Article 3 to establish a baseline and test whether acknowledgments, consolidated deficiency notices, explanations and escalation improve the process. Compare materially similar cases and record staffing demands, costs, missing evidence and concurrent changes. Expansion should follow a documented assessment, not an assumption that a new form or instruction resolved the problem.

What remains unresolved at Butner

A facility-specific finding requires the operative local instructions, dated case timelines, calculation and referral records, and a defensible comparison of legally relevant circumstances. Complaints can identify leads; differences in placement length can identify cases for review. Neither is a substitute for establishing the governing rule and the reason for the difference.

The next Butner research product should therefore be a documented comparative case study. It should explain case selection, protect personal information, include contrary evidence and distinguish a legal restriction, individualized judgment, correctable administrative error and support or capacity barrier. Until that work is complete, this

volume should not be presented as a completed finding of local discrimination or unlawful delay.

Standard for the next edition

The next edition should report what records were obtained, what changed after a correction and which conclusions survived independent scrutiny. It should retain the distinction between an institutional research position, an enforceable legal duty and a verified empirical finding. The present volume provides the legal analysis, documentary foundation, proposed controls and instruments needed to begin that work.

About The Starlings Institute

The Starlings Institute publishes research and systems analysis through a Human Systems Architecture perspective. Its journal connects the study of human conditions with questions of institutional design and public administration.

The prerelease project examines how legal eligibility, information, administrative workflow, housing and community support interact. Its purpose is to make those relationships visible enough to evaluate and improve.

Journal leadership

Kevin A. Starlings is the journal's Founding Editor-in-Chief, as identified in Volume 1. The review status and evidence standards for this issue are described in Editorial and Research Review.

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Editorial and Research Review

This is a dated institutional publication. No external peer review or independent attorney review is represented. Finalization for this edition does not convert proposals into validated findings or research instruments into completed studies.

Evidence and method

This targeted documentary synthesis selects sources for their relevance to legal authority, credit administration, placement workflow and oversight. It is not an exhaustive or systematic search. Public-source selection and unavailable internal instructions limit the conclusions.

Statutes, regulations, judicial decisions, oversight reports and agency announcements have different evidentiary roles. Oversight findings retain their original populations and periods. Announcements do not establish implementation at every facility. No original interviews, confidential case-file audit or completed institutional comparison is reported. The Butner investigation remains preliminary.

Corrections and version history

Send proposed corrections to info@StarlingsInstitute.org, identifying the article, page, passage and supporting source. The original edition is dated October 17, 2026. The October 18 revision clarifies the volume's synthesis, article roles, pilot plan, appendices and publication disclosures. The source cutoff remains October 17, 2026.

Later revisions should state their revision date and explain material changes in law, case status, instructions or findings. This issue is educational research and policy analysis, not an individual release determination or legal advice.

Research integrity

Future case research should protect personal information, document consent where needed, report missing and contrary evidence, and distinguish allegations from verified findings. Selected complaints cannot establish a national rate or a local violation. Future research instruments require appropriate piloting and review before use.



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