

FINAL REPORT AND BLUEPRINT

# Building a Service Line to Support Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse

## Findings from Stakeholder Conversations and a Proposed Blueprint

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National Sexual Violence  
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# Executive Summary

Sexual abuse and harassment in US correctional facilities remains a critical issue, with thousands of cases reported annually. These incidents are significantly underreported, however, owing to barriers including fear of retaliation, stigma, and lack of confidentiality. To mitigate these challenges, two standards of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA), Standards § 115.51 and 115.53, call for external responses to sexual abuse in corrections. The purpose of PREA Standard § 115.51 is to ensure incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse have several ways to report victimization, including an option to report to an entity outside of their facility.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the purpose of PREA Standard § 115.53 is to ensure that incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse have access to emotional support services from an entity outside of their facility.<sup>2</sup> Though these and other PREA standards exist to support and protect incarcerated survivors, fewer than half of states, territories, and the District of Columbia are in full compliance with PREA.<sup>3</sup>

To determine whether and how a national service line could help correctional facilities implement PREA Standards 115.51/115.351 and 115.53/115.353, the Office on Violence Against Women, in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, funded the Urban Institute and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center to conduct an assessment. To conduct that assessment, the project team held focus groups and interviews with four key respondent groups: (1) PREA auditors, (2) victim service providers, (3) correctional leaders and staff from 20 correctional facilities, including federal, state, and county facilities, and (4) incarcerated people from 6 correctional facilities. The team spoke to 165 individuals and asked questions that fell into the following three main domains:

- reporting sexual abuse (PREA Standard 115.51/115.351)
- emotional support services related to sexual abuse (PREA Standard 115.53/115.353)
- feedback on developing a service line to support external reporting and emotional support services

Based on these conversations, our team created this report and blueprint for the design and implementation of a national service line for reporting sexual abuse externally and accessing external emotional support services. Recommendations included in the blueprint were finalized with guidance from the Office on Violence Against Women and the Bureau of Justice Assistance and by a steering committee of experts, including formerly incarcerated survivors, practitioners, and scholars.

# Summary of Findings on Reporting Sexual Abuse

Correctional staff, auditors, service providers, and incarcerated people cited multiple ways to report sexual abuse both internally and externally. Table ES.1 summarizes the different reporting options stakeholders mentioned.

**TABLE ES.1**  
**Incarcerated Survivors’ Options for Reporting Sexual Abuse**

Internally	Externally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ verbally in person to a facility staff member</li> <li>▪ written message to a facility staff member</li> <li>▪ text message to a facility staff member via tablet</li> <li>▪ email on correctional messaging system to facility staff members via kiosk or tablet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ written message to reporting recipient via postal mail</li> <li>▪ phone call to reporting recipient or hotline</li> <li>▪ in person to someone else, like a family member or attorney, during a visit</li> </ul>

**Source:** Interviews and focus groups conducted by the authors with correctional staff, auditors, service providers, and incarcerated people between November 2022 and October 2023.

The most common recipients of reports of sexual abuse include internal facility staff (facilities’ PREA coordinators, correctional officers, clinicians, or any other types of staff), external victim service providers, external law enforcement agencies, external correctional agencies, the US Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Inspector General (mostly for reports made by Bureau of Prisons facilities), and local ombudsmen’s offices. Confidentiality and anonymity, however, are not equally guaranteed across these reporting options. Some facilities have arranged not to automatically record phone calls to certain phone numbers, such as outside reporting lines, whereas in others all phone calls are automatically recorded. Incarcerated participants also reported there are many ways to report sexual abuse, including reporting internally to facility staff and externally through a hotline. They added that friends and family may also report on their behalf. Regarding direct reports made by incarcerated survivors to formal entities, about one-third of incarcerated people we interviewed were unsure of who received or answered reports.

# Summary of Findings on Emotional Support Services

When asked who provides emotional support services to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse, most correctional leaders and staff were able to share examples of outside entities that deliver such services. Correctional focus group participants, not including those from the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), shared that their facilities had partnerships with local service providers, statewide coalitions, and a hospital.



Service providers reported having established memorandums of understanding that enable them to provide services to incarcerated people. Furthermore, one PREA auditor and at least three service providers reported that corrections agencies sometimes partner with national groups to provide emotional support services.

The types of services that correctional leaders and staff reported are provided generally fell into three categories: (1) crisis response and immediate response to reports, including provision of an advocate and support at the hospital, (2) trauma programming, and (3) general mental health support services that can also help incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse.

Corrections leaders and staff, BOP stakeholders, and PREA auditors discussed services available in correctional facilities (internal services) and those available outside facilities (external services) for incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse. Internal services mostly included general mental health departments that provide clinical treatment for all incarcerated people, including those who may have been victimized. External victim services mostly included mental health treatment, hospital accompaniment for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) exams, group programming, and safety planning for reentry.

Service providers and coalitions reported operating hotlines with corrections agencies to receive support services. Providers also reported that staff at the coalitions might provide immediate support via the hotlines or delegate it to a member agency. Other service providers from local organizations and affiliated with coalitions also reported operating hotlines and different ways of doing so.

Incarcerated people reported both internally and externally provided services. Most incarcerated people reported that support services were available from internal mental health units. Regarding externally provided services, about one-third of incarcerated people were unsure whether outside emotional support services were available.

Incarcerated people also discussed the types of services available. Regarding internal services, most referenced mental health services. Regarding external services, they mentioned group programs and a hotline connected to an organization in the community.

## Other Important Findings

Incarcerated people learn about their options for reporting sexual abuse and seeking emotional support services through posters in their facilities, orientation at intake, handbooks/rulebooks for

incarcerated people, routine announcements, and, in some facilities, hearing reminders about PREA on the phone lines.

Bureau of Prisons staff, correctional leaders and staff, and PREA auditors shared that people who are deaf or hard of hearing have a few ways to report sexual abuse or communicate with others, including via teletypewriters, which an incarcerated person can use to type information in English that is relayed over the phone.

PREA auditors, correctional staff and leaders, community service providers, and some incarcerated people shared that people who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency have a few options for reporting sexual abuse and seeking emotional support services, such as language lines, translators, and teletypewriter lines. In addition to using interpretation lines, some facilities and service providers also rely on staff members, particularly those who speak Spanish, to interpret for incarcerated people.

According to all stakeholders, overarching challenges around reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services include (1) confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy; (2) collaboration between correctional facilities and victim service providers; (3) finding external reporting entities and emotional support service providers; (4) limited and inefficient communication about reporting avenues and emotional support services; (5) false PREA allegations and misuse of reporting and emotional support services; (6) technology issues; and (7) supporting overlooked populations.

Lastly, stakeholders discussed a number of successes including improvements in technology and increased use of tablets for incarcerated people, finding external law enforcement agencies willing to receive reports, relying on hotlines run by local service providers, being able to deliver care virtually, memorandums of understanding between corrections and service providers, trainings, and limited, yet quality, partnerships that assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

## A Blueprint and Recommendations for Implementing a Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Through analyzing these discussions and considering stakeholders' recommendations we developed a blueprint and recommendations for establishing a service line to support external reporting and service delivery for incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse.

## Core Components of the Service Line

We recommend that the service line have the following 10 core components:

1. one 24/7 line for both reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services
2. non-law enforcement recipient of reports
3. providers specialized in delivering trauma-informed emotional support services to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse
4. multiple ways to use the service line
5. privacy and confidentiality to the extent possible in all ways of using the service line
6. accessibility for overlooked populations
7. training for system stakeholders
8. comprehensive and frequent education for incarcerated people
9. routine maintenance
10. data collection and analysis

## Potential Models for Implementing the Service Line

We recommend four potential models for implementing the service line.

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MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3	MODEL 4
State Reporting and State Emotional Support Services	National Reporting and National Emotional Support Services	National Reporting and State Emotional Support Services	State Reporting and National Emotional Support Services

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We recognize there are benefits and disadvantages to each model and lay those out in the recommendations in our blueprint. **We recommend that the service line be piloted on a small scale before being fully implemented. The pilot period will be necessary to refine certain components of the service line and ensure full functionality before full implementation.**



# Introduction

**Sexual abuse is a significant problem in correctional facilities across the United States.** Each year, thousands of sexual assault, abuse, and harassment reports are made by incarcerated people. These reports come from people of all genders across all types of correctional facilities. However, sexual abuse remains significantly underreported. The National Inmate Survey-3 (part of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Prison Rape Statistics Program) estimates that from 2011 to 2012, 80,600 incarcerated people experienced sexual victimization, which amounts to 57,900 people incarcerated in federal and state prisons and 27,700 people incarcerated in jails (Beck et al. 2013).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, according to Bureau of Justice Statistics data, officials in correctional facilities reported 27,826 allegations of sexual abuse in adult facilities in the United States in 2018 (Maruschak and Buehler 2021).<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics data also show a steady increase in sexual violence and victimization allegations in correctional facilities between 2012 and 2018 (Maruschak and Buehler 2021).<sup>6</sup>

**People incarcerated in correctional facilities are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than the general US population.** In 2019, sexual violence in the US occurred at a rate of 1.7 victimizations per 1,000 people (Morgan and Ouderkerk 2019). Though these experiences are underreported because of fear of retaliation, judgement, and disbelief, the prevalence of sexual abuse in the general population is lower than that in correctional settings (Marcellin and McCoy 2021; Morgan and Ouderkerk 2019).

**Certain populations experience disproportionate rates of sexual violence in correctional facilities.** These populations include survivors of prior sexual violence, people with behavioral health needs, and LGBTQ+ people (Beck et al. 2013; Marcellin and McCoy 2021). Nearly 40 percent of incarcerated transgender people reported experiencing sexual victimization during incarceration, compared with 4 percent of all incarcerated people, and Black, Latina, and mixed-race transgender women are even more likely to experience sexual victimization while incarcerated (BJS 2007, 2010, 2013; Reisner, Bailey, and Sevelius 2014).

**Incarcerated people experience high rates of trauma and victimization before their incarceration and carry the effects of that trauma into correctional facilities.** Specifically, incarcerated people experience high rates of trauma exposure, interpersonal trauma, victimization, posttraumatic stress disorder, and violence prior to their incarceration (Beck et al. 2013; Browne, Miller, and Maguin 1999; Lynch, Fritch, and Heath 2012; Wolff et al. 2014). The National Inmate Survey-3 found that, among incarcerated people who had been sexually victimized by another incarcerated person, 12 percent were victimized before their incarceration. In addition, nearly 7 percent of incarcerated survivors of

staff sexual violence had experienced prior victimization. Incarcerated people with victimization histories were much more likely to report sexual abuse during incarceration than other incarcerated people (Beck et al. 2013). The effects of prior victimization, including mental health problems and substance abuse, may exacerbate the vulnerability of incarcerated survivors to further victimization experiences (Ervin et al. 2020).

**Sexual abuse during incarceration can lead to increased risk of adverse mental and physical health impacts.** One study of just under 3,000 women in prison showed that sexual abuse can lead to depression, chronic health problems, paranoia, and attempted suicide (Aday, Dye, and Kaiser 2014). Access to adequate internal and external support, including confidential emotional support services, is key to providing incarcerated survivors with the help they need to recover from trauma and potentially minimize negative mental and physical health impacts.

**Incarcerated people encounter multiple barriers to reporting sexual abuse and receiving emotional support services.** In interviews with incarcerated people in a minimum-security women's prison, participants named "stigma and gossip, officer camaraderie, and fear of retaliation as the dominant barriers to reporting and investigating sexual assault" (Surrell and Johnson 2020, 559). Research also demonstrates that attitudes among corrections staff regarding abuse (e.g., believing "rape myths" and "ideal victim" discourse, or being trained not to believe incarcerated people who may have caused harm) may create additional barriers to reporting (Brenner et al. 2016). For incarcerated survivors, challenges in obtaining services can include corrections staff being inexperienced in treating incarcerated people as victims, fear of and misperceptions about incarcerated survivors, rapid turnover among agency staff and leadership, and competition with other priorities (such as sexual abuse on college campuses, in the military, and related to trafficking) that are given precedence over incarcerated survivors (Ervin et al. 2020).

## The Prison Rape Elimination Act

In 2003, to address sexual abuse behind bars, Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) with unanimous, bipartisan support and charged the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission with developing standards to eliminate prison rape. The law then required the Department of Justice to issue regulations based on the standards developed by the commission, which took effect in August 2012.<sup>7</sup> The final PREA standards cover prevention planning, responsiveness planning, training and education, screening for risk of sexual victimization and abusiveness, reporting, investigation practices, medical and mental health care for survivors, data collection and review, auditing and corrective

action, and several categories of policy and practice change to address sexual victimization, ensuring incarcerated people have access to confidential communication with community-based victim advocates and service providers.<sup>8</sup> Though just over a decade has passed since these standards were adopted, as of August 2020 only 20 states and territories and the District of Columbia had reached certified full compliance with PREA.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, 29 states and territories had submitted assurances to work toward full compliance, and 6 had not submitted a certification or assurance.<sup>10</sup> Two PREA standards, 115.51/115.351 and 115.53/115.353 (table 1), have proven especially challenging for facilities to comply with. In particular, facilities struggle to deliver anonymity around reporting and confidentiality around emotional support services.

**TABLE 1**

**Two PREA Standards Carceral Facilities Have Struggled to Comply With**

<b>PREA Standard 115.51/115.351</b>	<b>PREA Standard 115.53/115.353</b>
This standard requires confinement agencies to provide incarcerated people with several ways to report sexual abuse, including at least one way to report sexual abuse or harassment to a public or private entity separate from the confinement facility that is able to receive and immediately forward those reports to agency officials, allowing survivors to remain anonymous upon request.	This standard requires confinement facilities to provide people who are incarcerated with access to outside victim advocates for emotional support services related to sexual abuse and for communication between incarcerated survivors and these organizations to be as confidential as possible.

**Source:** “National Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA),” 28 CFR 115 (2012).

**Note:** PREA = Prison Rape Elimination Act.

## Our Project

The Office on Violence Against Women, in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, funded the Urban Institute and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, with Just Detention International as an advisory partner, to conduct an assessment to determine whether and how a national service line could help correctional facilities implement PREA Standards 115.51/115.351 and 115.53/115.353. We completed a series of assessments of current research, literature, and practices on (1) mechanisms for incarcerated people to report abuse and harassment, (2) mechanisms for incarcerated people to receive access to outside victim services related to sexual abuse, (3) the extent of compliance in correctional facilities with PREA Standards 115.51 and 115.53, and (4) whether and how a service line could help facilities comply with PREA standards. This project, which culminated in this blueprint for the design and implementation of a national service line, was completed in collaboration with and with guidance from the Office on Violence Against Women and the Bureau of

Justice Assistance and by a steering committee of experts, including formerly incarcerated survivors, practitioners, and scholars.



# Methodology

To achieve the goals of this project, our team conducted focus groups and interviews with four key respondent groups: (1) PREA auditors, (2) victim service providers, (3) correctional leaders and staff from 20 correctional facilities, including federal, state, and county facilities, and (4) incarcerated people from 6 correctional facilities. Focus groups and interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours. Data collection occurred between November 2022 and October 2023 and was conducted virtually, either over Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

We administered informed-consent procedures before all focus groups and interviews, and all participants provided consent. With participants' permission, we audio-recorded focus groups and interviews (except in federal prisons, where we were not permitted to record) to ensure the experiences and perspectives they shared were accurately documented. We also took notes during each focus group and interview so we could follow up and ask for clarification as needed. All stakeholders were asked questions that fell into the following three main domains:

1. reporting sexual abuse (PREA Standard 115.51/115.351)
2. emotional support services related to sexual abuse (PREA Standard 115.53/115.353)
3. feedback on developing a service line to support external reporting and emotional support services

## Types of Data-Collection Activities

In total, we heard the perspectives of 165 people who lived, worked, or were incarcerated in 35 states. Just over half of the study sample (53 percent,  $n=88$ ) represented either nonfederal correctional staff or federal prison correctional staff. Twenty percent were certified PREA auditors ( $n=33$ ), 17 percent were incarcerated people ( $n=28$ ), and 10 percent were victim service providers ( $n=16$ ). Table 2 shows our research activities by number and share of participants.

TABLE 2

**Distribution of Research Activities**

	Type of data-collection activity	Total Participants (N=165)	
		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Correctional staff and leadership</b>		88	53%
Nonfederal correctional staff and leadership	Focus groups,	71	43%
Federal correctional staff and leadership	interviews	17	10%
<b>PREA auditors</b>	Focus group	33	20%
<b>Incarcerated people</b>	Interviews	28	17%
<b>Victim service providers</b>	Focus groups	16	10%
<b>Total</b>		165	100%

Source: Authors' analysis of research activities conducted between November 2022 and October 2023.

We encountered challenges in recruiting correctional facilities and victim service providers to participate in focus groups and interviews. This likely owed to many factors, including the correctional staffing crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic (which was ongoing during data collection), and the unpredictable nature and timing of victim service providers' work. Furthermore, in some correctional facilities, we encountered challenges in recruiting incarcerated people who were willing to speak on this topic.

### Focus Groups and Interviews with Correctional Leaders and Staff

Twenty correctional facilities, including 5 state prisons, 3 federal prisons, 8 county jails, and 4 youth facilities, participated in this project, representing 17 states. Across these 20 facilities, we conducted a total of 32 focus groups and interviews, reaching 88 correctional leaders and staff (see table 2). Because of Bureau of Prisons (BOP) policy, we were not able to conduct focus groups with staff in federal prisons, so we only conducted individual interviews with these staff.

We drew from many sources to identify potential correctional facilities to participate in this part of the project, including contacts from previous projects, recommendations from federal partners, and referrals from our steering committee. Once a facility agreed to participate, we requested the names and contact information of relevant correctional leaders and staff. In the case of state and county facilities, these included wardens, deputy wardens, directors of security and operations, PREA coordinators, and correctional officers who could speak about the reporting of sexual abuse and delivery of emotional support services in their facilities. For federal facilities, stakeholders included PREA coordinators, health services administrators, administrators for incarcerated people's telephone systems, internal affairs investigators, and chief psychologists. We summarize the characteristics of the 20 correctional facilities where leaders and/or staff participated in this project in table 3.

TABLE 3

Characteristics of Correctional Facilities Where Leaders and Staff Participated in This Project

	Participating Correctional Facilities (N=20)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
South	9	45%
Midwest	5	25%
Northeast	4	20%
West	2	10%
<b>Facility type</b>		
County jail	8	40%
State prison	5	25%
Federal prison	3	20%
Youth facility	4	15%
<b>Gender</b>		
All genders	11	55%
Adult women	5	25%
Adult men	4	20%
<b>Security level</b>		
Mixed security	11	55%
Minimum/low/administrative security	3	15%
Medium security	3	15%
Maximum/high security	3	15%
<b>Rural versus urban location</b>		
Metropolitan area > 1 million people	11	55%
Metropolitan area < 250,000 people	4	20%
Nonmetropolitan area, tribal area, or small metropolitan area	5	25%

Source: Authors' analysis of characteristics of correctional facilities that participated in this project.

### Focus Groups with PREA Auditors

We engaged with PREA auditors residing in 20 US states. We conducted a total of 6 focus groups, reaching 33 PREA auditors who have conducted audits in 49 states and the District of Columbia. This represents a response rate of 60 percent out of the final eligible pool of 55 interested PREA auditors.

To recruit PREA auditors, we worked with a representative from the Bureau of Justice Assistance's PREA Management Office, who circulated an email invitation to their list of PREA auditors requesting that all those interested in participating complete an online Qualtrics survey. The survey asked respondents for basic contact information, whether they had an active PREA certification, their certification type (adult, youth, or both), how many audits they had completed since January 2019 and in which states, and their state of residence.

A total of 87 PREA auditors expressed interest and completed the survey. We removed 32 respondents because they (1) had conducted zero audits since January 2019, (2) did not indicate how many audits they had conducted since January 2019, or (3) did not have an active PREA certification. The final eligible pool of interested PREA auditors consisted of 55 people. We conducted individual outreach to each of those auditors to schedule them for a focus group with others and conducted multiple rounds of follow-up with each auditor. We summarize the characteristics of the 33 PREA auditors who participated in table 4.

**TABLE 4**  
**Characteristics of Participating PREA Auditors**

	Participating PREA Auditors (N=33)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>PREA certification</b>		
Actively certified	33	100%
<b>PREA certification type</b>		
Adult facilities certified	18	55%
Both adult and youth facilities certified	12	36%
Youth facilities certified	3	9%
<b>Audits completed since January 2019</b>		
11 or more	18	55%
4-10	8	24%
1-3	7	21%
<b>Region where audits completed</b>		
South	65	35%
West	57	31%
Midwest	41	22%
Northeast	22	12%
<b>Region of residence</b>		
South	16	48%
West	11	33%
Midwest	4	12%
Northeast	2	6%

**Source:** Authors' analysis of characteristics of PREA auditors who participated in this project.

**Notes:** PREA = Prison Rape Elimination Act. When asked where they had conducted audits, the 33 PREA auditors cited different US states 185 times. The research team categorized those responses by state and then by region to determine "region where audits completed."

## FOCUS GROUPS WITH VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDERS

We engaged with victim service providers residing in 11 US states. We conducted five focus groups with 16 victim service providers, representing a response rate of 37 percent out of the final eligible pool of 43 interested providers.<sup>11</sup>

To recruit victim service providers, we worked with a representative from Just Detention International, who circulated an email invitation to their list of victim service providers with experience working with incarcerated people requesting that all interested providers complete an online Qualtrics survey. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center also shared an invitation with its staff and emailed an invitation to its listserv of state sexual assault coalitions. The Qualtrics survey asked respondents for basic contact information, whether they or their organization had worked with incarcerated survivors, their organization’s location information, and, if they were a victim service provider, whether they belonged to a statewide coalition and what its name was.

A total of 83 victim service providers, including representatives of statewide sexual assault coalitions, expressed interest and completed the survey. We removed 2 respondents because they answered “never” to the question about whether they or their organization had worked with incarcerated survivors. The final eligible pool of interested victim service providers consisted of 81 people. We sorted respondents by US region, and in each region we conducted individual outreach to every other respondent to participate in a focus group. All respondents who worked at a statewide sexual assault coalition were invited to participate in a focus group just for them. We conducted multiple rounds of follow-up with each invited victim service provider. We summarize the characteristics of the 16 participating victim service providers in table 5.

**TABLE 5**  
**Characteristics of Participating Victim Service Providers**

	Participating Victim Service Providers (N=16)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Frequency working with incarcerated survivors</b>		
Often	11	69%
Sometimes	5	31%
<b>Region of residence</b>		
Northeast	6	38%
Midwest	6	38%
South	4	25%
West	0	0%
<b>Rural versus urban location</b>		
Urban area	12	75%
Rural area	4	25%
<b>Works with statewide sexual assault coalition</b>		
Yes	8	50%
No	3	19%
Organization is statewide sexual assault coalition	5	31%

**Source:** Authors’ analysis of the characteristics of victim service providers who participated in this project.

## Interviews with Incarcerated People

Lastly, we conducted 28 interviews with incarcerated people from 6 correctional facilities in 6 different states. We reached out to a subset of 9 correctional facilities and were able to secure participation from 6, representing a 67 percent response rate.

This subset was selected based on geographic location, population served, and facility leadership’s responsiveness and perceived willingness to allow our research team to speak with incarcerated people. Although we secured participation from an adult men’s facility, no incarcerated people there expressed interest during recruitment. Furthermore, we did not pursue engagement with incarcerated youth because of informed-consent challenges.

Once a facility agreed to participate, we confirmed that it had a private room for the interview and technology to support virtual video interviews. We then asked a designated facility stakeholder to recruit a diverse group of five incarcerated people (diverse in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, English proficiency, and ability status) and provided talking points and a participant information flyer for those recruitment efforts. Table 6 summarizes the characteristics of the 6 correctional facilities where incarcerated people participated in this project.

**TABLE 6**  
**Characteristics of Correctional Facilities Where Incarcerated People Participated in This Project**

	Participating Correctional Facilities (N=6)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
South	3	50%
Midwest	2	33%
Northeast	1	17%
West	0	0%
<b>Facility type</b>		
County jail	3	50%
State prison	3	50%
<b>Gender</b>		
All genders	3	50%
Adult women	3	50%
Adult men	0	0%
<b>Security level</b>		
Mixed security	3	50%
Minimum/low/administrative security	1	17%
Medium security	1	17%

<b>Participating Correctional Facilities (N=6)</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Maximum/high security	1	17%
<b>Rural versus urban location</b>		
Metropolitan area > 1 million people	2	33%
Nonmetropolitan area with 2,500 to 19,999 people adjacent to metro area	2	33%
Metropolitan area < 250,000 people	1	17%
Metropolitan area between 250,000 and 1 million people	1	17%

**Source:** Authors' analysis of characteristics of correctional facilities from which incarcerated people participated in this project.

**Notes:** We were unable to recruit any facilities in the West. We originally recruited from two state prisons that serve adult men, but they received no interest from incarcerated people and are therefore not represented in the sample.

# Results

## Reporting of Sexual Abuse

In this section we share our findings from speaking with 165 people, including PREA auditors, victim service providers, correctional leaders and staff, and incarcerated people, on current sexual abuse reporting practices under PREA Standard 115.51/115.351. We first discuss ways incarcerated people currently report sexual abuse during incarceration, then discuss who receives these reports, and conclude with challenges and successes in reporting.

### Options for Reporting Internally and Externally

We learned from participants that incarcerated survivors are offered different reporting options, including options for reporting internally at their facilities and externally to outside entities (table 7). Participants of all types (correctional staff, auditors, service providers, and incarcerated people) cited multiple ways to report.

TABLE 7

**Incarcerated Survivors' Options for Reporting Sexual Abuse**

Internally	Externally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ verbally in person to a facility staff member</li><li>▪ written message to a facility staff member</li><li>▪ text message to a facility staff member via tablet</li><li>▪ email on correctional messaging system to facility staff members via kiosk or tablet</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ written message to reporting recipient via postal mail</li><li>▪ phone call to reporting recipient or hotline</li><li>▪ in person to someone else, like a family member or attorney, during a visit</li></ul>

**Source:** Interviews and focus groups conducted by the authors with correctional staff, auditors, service providers, and incarcerated people between November 2022 and October 2023.

Participants reported that incarcerated survivors can report internally to a facility staff member verbally, via written letter, or via text message or email on a kiosk or tablet in the facility. They also shared that incarcerated survivors can report externally via a written message or phone call to a designated reporting recipient or verbally in person to someone not affiliated with the facility. Incarcerated people can tell a family member, attorney, facility medical or mental health provider, victim service provider, or victim advocate during their interactions with them. For instance, an incarcerated survivor could use a mental health appointment to report sexual abuse. Correctional staff and leaders shared that they believe incarcerated survivors often choose to report to a medical or mental health staff member as opposed to a correctional officer or security staff member. Correctional



staff and leaders shared that incarcerated survivors can even ask staff members to use their personal office phones.

The survivors have a specific space, our office space, where people can come and meet with us, and pretty much if they want to report, it can be reported. If it's a PREA-related incident, and I think that's sort of in my mind because it was a stop or correctional officers, or a different kind of correction staff being accused of sexually exploiting people who were incarcerated women. Then there is a whole process of course, you know, under PREA what that looks like.  
—Victim service provider

Confidentiality and anonymity, however, are not equally guaranteed across these reporting options. Some facilities have arranged not to automatically record phone calls to certain phone numbers, such as outside reporting lines, whereas in others all phone calls are automatically recorded. And although some facilities have electronic messaging platforms that are made available to incarcerated people and are confidential for sending messages to certain recipients, such as the Office of Inspector General, others may not have confidentiality in their messaging platforms.

It [a report sent via a messaging platform] doesn't show up in the inmates' sent items. Basically, so that if another inmate were to be looking over their shoulder or something, that message doesn't show up in their sent items. And so there's no way for the facility to monitor that.  
—PREA auditor

People can't see what they're actually typing. But they know they're typing something; it could be a medical request. It just depends on what they click on. If they click on for you, then it'll come to me. But you know, so they don't. They don't know what the other user is typing.  
—Corrections leader or staff member

## Typical Recipients of Reports

When asked who receives reports of sexual abuse from incarcerated people, participants cited a diverse group. We learned of 20 types of recipients that receive such reports, according to participants in focus groups and interviews with PREA auditors, correctional staff and leaders, and incarcerated people. The most common recipients include the following:

- **Internal facility staff.** This can mean a facility's PREA coordinator, correctional officer, clinician, or any other type of facility staff member.
- **External local service providers.** The most common type of local service provider mentioned was a local rape crisis center that receives reports and/or administers a hotline made available to incarcerated people.<sup>12</sup>

- **External law enforcement agencies.** Many facilities seem to have agreements with law enforcement agencies; for instance, a state prison might have an agreement with a police department or prosecutor's office located somewhere in its state that receives reports from people incarcerated in the facility.
- **External correctional agencies.** Some respondents cited "reciprocal agreements" between correctional agencies that agree to receive each other's reports. These agreements are made between facilities in the same states and between facilities in different states that have partnered to form an auditing consortium.
- **The US Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General.** This office was referenced more often regarding reports from incarcerated people in federal prisons, but also regarding those from people in other types of correctional facilities.
- **Local ombudsmen's offices.** These could be county, city, or state ombudsmen's offices, which are usually external to corrections.

Recipients that were mentioned less frequently were private reporting entities or organizations like Crime Stoppers USA; state offices, such as PREA coordinators' offices, governors' offices, and internal affairs offices; and even local civilian oversight task forces.

There were some trends in reporting recipients by facility type. Jails typically have county and city offices serving as report recipients, including local police departments, city attorneys' offices, and county prosecutors' offices. In the case of youth facilities, state or local departments were mentioned most often, including child protective services, local child welfare / child advocacy organizations, departments of children and families, departments of health and human services, and even local school districts (when in a facility to deliver school classes to incarcerated young people).

Importantly, the large number of different types of recipients represents the breadth and diverse implementation of PREA Standard 115.51/115.351, which raises a potential concern about consistency across facilities. Respondents had different views on whether it is appropriate for law enforcement entities and rape crisis centers to receive reports. Concerns involved (1) law enforcement not being equipped to properly handle reports and protect people's anonymity, and (2) rape crisis centers being bound to confidentiality and not being able to inform correctional facilities, which, per PREA requirements, need to follow up with investigations.

A lot of the small jails, they'll use like the local police department or county attorney's office. So, I run into some places where the sheriff's department has oversight of the jail, but detention is a separate arm. I've had some discussions with a handful of people about whether or not

that's compliant because it's run by a detention director or a jail administrator that's not a sworn deputy and they use their reporting entity as the sheriff's department. I kind of still have a hard time with that because ultimately the sheriff is still in charge of all of it. So, usually I direct them towards some other type of, whether it's local police department or the county attorney's office or someone like that. —PREA auditor

However, we did hear from some service providers that they prefer to receive reports instead of having corrections or law enforcement receive them:

Our department of corrections felt protective of remaining in control of that line which, in some instances, makes sense. Maybe it's more efficient, but in other instances it really doesn't. It presents a conflict of interest, huge, and it's still kind of bothering me. And this is sort of my commentary. It is still very bothersome to go, and the line goes to a voicemail that gets checked by the same people that might be accused of sexual assault. I mean those parts have not been really streamlined in [my state], and it's still a little bit worrisome when people, and I think women at the facility, know what the process is, and so they will shy away.  
—Victim service provider

I've long been concerned about the ability of individuals affected by sexual assault within correctional settings to have someone to be able to report that to outside of the staff themselves because [that is] obviously problematic. —Victim service provider

Regardless of what types of recipients they felt were preferable, most respondents agreed that the best option is to have multiple ways for people to report so that they can select whichever option is most comfortable for them, and that this reduces barriers to reporting.

## Perspectives of Incarcerated People on Reporting

Incarcerated people we interviewed also reflected that there are many ways to report sexual abuse, including reporting internally to facility staff, externally through a hotline, and to friends and family who may report on their behalf:

I think the service now they have is pretty good because if you want to report it, there are a lot of ways that you could report it if you want to. You could write it up and give it to the officer if you want to. Or you could call. If you want to report it, you can report it. —Incarcerated person

I get [it] from the kiosk in my dorm. I can put in a request or grievance like to contact PREA. Or on the phones that are available to us, I can hit 91 or 92. Or I could write a letter to my family and have them do it or I could tell them on the phone to my family, ask them to do it for me. Or I can report it to another officer, an officer when they come around. I suppose I could do that too. —Incarcerated person

You can call, you can use the kiosk, or you can tell the deputies or corrections officers. You can tell a nurse, you can tell, for instance, whoever you have your family calling for. I think I listed them all. I don't know all the different ways. I think I got it all. I believe you can write somebody, send mail to somebody, and then you can report it on the phone. —Incarcerated person

However, about one-third of incarcerated people we interviewed were unsure of who received or answered reports. Some shared that they had no idea who responds, whereas others noted that their facility PREA coordinator, an external third-party private company, or another facility staff member answers reports.

We also heard about a practice whereby a facility reminds incarcerated people of ways to report every time they use the phone. This seemed to be a helpful way to discreetly provide the information, especially when someone was using the phone to make a report and did not remember where to call:

When you come in, they talk to you about it and then you hear every time you pick up the phone to use the phone: it says for sexual abuse, hit 91. So, it reminds you that way and once you're here for like 25 days, they have a person that goes over that with you. They pull you out and they just go over it with you and ask you if you understand and if you had any situations that would pertain to that. So, they're pretty adamant about it and then I also had a face-to-face interview with a PREA person that came here. So, any time that you go to make a phone call or need to make a phone call, the first thing that comes up on the phone is if you have any concerns with sexual abuse or sexual assault dial 91 or 92. So it gives you options right off the [phone]. –Incarcerated person

Lastly, incarcerated people face many challenges with reporting, which we detail in the [“Challenges with Reporting and Emotional Support Services”](#) section below.

## Emotional Support Services

Regarding the PREA standard around the provision of services to incarcerated people by external entities, we asked about the different partnerships in place to facilitate external services, types of services, and associated challenges and successes. The below narrative contains our findings about emotional support services.

### **Partnerships between Service Providers and Corrections Agencies**

All professional stakeholder groups that participated in this study—service providers, corrections officials, BOP leaders, and PREA auditors—reported that partnerships between correctional facilities and service providers inform externally provided services for incarcerated people. When asked who provides emotional support services to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse, most correctional leaders and staff were able to share examples of outside entities that deliver such services. Correctional focus group participants, not including those from BOP, shared that their facilities had partnerships with organizations that provide these services in the following numbers:

- 12 examples of local rape crisis centers and/or domestic violence service providers
- 3 examples of state sexual assault and/or domestic violence coalitions
- 1 example of a hospital

There was limited mention of some BOP facilities having memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with external service providers, which were all local victim advocate agencies. It was clear that not all facilities had an MOU with an external service provider. It is also important to note that when asked whether they had external agencies for emotional support services, many BOP staff and leaders responded by mentioning services that were available in their facilities. One interviewee reported that although external services were available, they had to be requested and incarcerated people preferred to use services offered in their facilities.

According to PREA auditors and service providers, most of the facilities that offer outside emotional support services to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse partner with a rape crisis center or local victim advocacy group to deliver them. Providers reported having established MOUs that enable them to provide services to incarcerated people. At least four providers reported that their organizations have MOUs that allow for various services, such as in-person advocacy services, letter writing, and in-person group programming.

One PREA auditor and at least three service providers reported that corrections agencies sometimes partnered with national groups, such as RAINN and Just Detention International, to provide emotional support services. One service provider discussed how one national organization operates a hotline at their local county jails and connects incarcerated survivors to their program after they reach out.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, a provider reported that Just Detention International operates a hotline in their jurisdiction. These partnerships allow for several services to be provided within corrections.

## **Types of Emotional Support and Other Services**

All stakeholder groups reported similar themes regarding the types of services provided to incarcerated people in response to sexual abuse and harassment. The types of services that correctional leaders and staff reported are provided generally fell into three categories: (1) crisis response and immediate response to reports, including provision of an advocate and support at the hospital; (2) trauma programming; and (3) general mental health support services that can also help incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse. To better understand ways that facilities provide services—including those related to PREA Standard 115.53—we delineate services that are internal and those

that are external. The majority of the stakeholders we spoke with reported offering a combination of internal and external services.

### TYPES OF INTERNAL SERVICES

Corrections leaders and staff, BOP stakeholders, and PREA auditors discussed services available in correctional facilities (internal) for incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse, and around five corrections staff *only* cited their internal services. Some of these included having a general mental health department that provides clinical treatment for all incarcerated people, including those who may have been victims. In addition, one jail reported having a mental health pod for women. Relatedly, one women's prison reported that its mental health staff not only have individual caseloads but also run trauma, survivor, and grief groups.

We have a mental health agency that is on ground 24/7. They work with people who have mental health issues, but they also have avenues for people who have experienced sexual abuse. They are actually trained to [be a] victim advocate. —Corrections leader or staff member

Those are internal resources. As I indicated, we have an established PREA support person, and that individual is [name redacted] who has a variety of skill sets. PREA training is something that will enhance our ability to be able to provide this service, but right now we do have an established PREA support person. —Corrections leader or staff member

Specifically, BOP stakeholders were much more knowledgeable about services offered in their facilities than about services offered by outside providers. Most interviewees noted that emotional support services were handled by BOP facilities' psychology departments. The most common types of internal services included individual and group counseling/therapy and trauma-based programming (the Resolve Program and the Trauma in Life Workshop). Facilities' medical departments were also sometimes involved, especially when an incarcerated person needed to be taken to a hospital for a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) exam.<sup>14</sup>

### TYPES OF EXTERNAL SERVICES

All professional stakeholders reported that their facilities or the facilities they work with use several types of external services. Corrections stakeholders reported relying on external victim service providers for mental health treatment, hospital accompaniment for SANE exams, group programming, and safety planning for reentry. Though they had few partnerships, BOP facilities partnered with external service providers to provide counseling to incarcerated survivors, host hotlines, and sometimes conduct medical evaluations. Lastly, the only additional external services that PREA auditors reported were legal advocacy services.

We work closely with a program called [program name redacted]. They're actually a women's shelter for domestic abuse. But they also provide services, such as counseling. They are advocates when it comes to sexual assault and sexual abuse. So, if someone were to be sexually assaulted in our facility, they get a call right away. They're twenty-four hours a day, and they always send out an advocate. And they arrive at the same time as law enforcement would arrive, and they will be there for that victim. —Corrections leader or staff member

If we were to send an individual out to our local hospital for an examination, our local hospitals have a SANE program built in. Within that, they have advocacy care. So when we send someone out, if the individual wants an advocate to be present during that process and the hospital contacts the local rape crisis center to report, we go to the hospital to walk them through that process. When it comes to on-ground services, we have mental health at every single facility and mental health is that qualified staff member to help them through support services at the facility resources that they need. Once they're back at the facility when it comes to being able to call an outside advocacy for that type of care, we currently do not have an advocacy that has entered into an MOU with us for that process. —Corrections leader or staff member

We also have a connection, a long-standing relationship with another nonprofit for specifically for domestic violence [name redacted] and they're great. Their staff member will help develop safety plans for release. They'll help do paperwork if [protection from abuse orders] or things like that need to happen. They'll work closely with the case workers. —Corrections leader or staff member

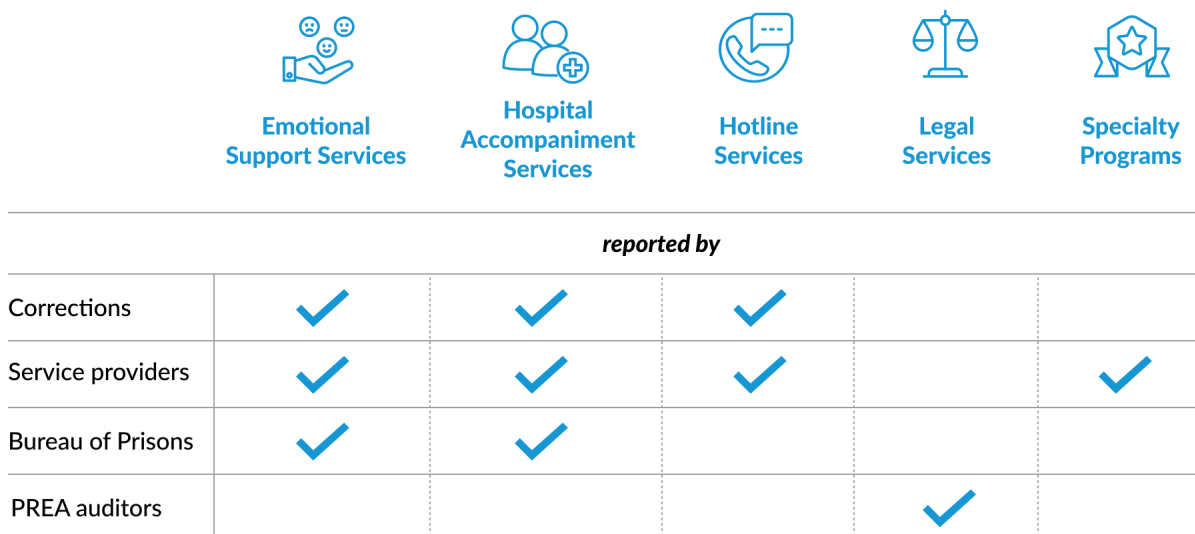
Of all stakeholder groups, service providers had the most robust reports of external services for incarcerated survivors. All providers, including statewide coalitions, reported providing various emotional support services to survivors. These services included accompaniment to hospitals following sexual assault, advocacy services, counseling in prisons, mental health support, support groups, housing, and substance abuse assistance during reentry.

We provide counseling and support groups in the prisons. We also work with a sister agency that focuses on mental health but also has housing advocates and are able to provide some transitional housing and substance abuse support to help folks as they are released from the facilities. Advocates provide emotional support and counseling. —Victim service provider

Statewide coalitions also reported specialty services for incarcerated survivors. For instance, the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence operates a program in a regional correctional facility called DIVAS, or Discussing Intimate Violence and Accessing Supports. This program houses “female-identified” survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking. Relatedly, a DV coalition also works with survivors who are incarcerated “as a direct result of their domestic violence.” In addition to the various services they provide, several providers—statewide coalitions and local organizations—reported operating hotlines for incarcerated survivors. Figure 1 summarizes services as reported by each stakeholder group that participated in this study.

FIGURE 1

**Summary of Services Provided to Incarcerated Survivors, According to Professional Stakeholder Group**



Source: Urban Institute.

Notes: PREA = Prison Rape Elimination Act. This figure shows the stakeholder groups reporting that different types of services are available to incarcerated survivors; stakeholder groups listed under each service do not necessarily provide that service themselves.

**Hotline Partnerships between Service Providers and Corrections Agencies**

Service providers and coalitions reported operating hotlines with corrections agencies. Some providers have experience with incarcerated people using their hotlines to receive support services. Statewide coalitions, such as the Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, have reportedly operated hotlines in correctional facilities. Providers reported that staff at the coalitions might provide immediate support via the hotlines or delegate it to a member agency.

Other service providers from local organizations and affiliated with coalitions also reported operating hotlines and different ways of doing so. For instance, one provider reported having previously had an MOU with jails that allowed phone lines to be installed there that enabled unrecorded calls to a local rape crisis center. Another provider reported that incarcerated survivors can call their sister domestic-violence program’s hotline and receive emotional support services for 15 minutes. Lastly, a provider reported that they operate the hotline and speak both English and Spanish to accommodate survivors with limited English proficiency, and when a survivor speaks another language, they can have three-way calls with the language line.



At one point when that wasn't one entity, we had an MOU with the jails specifically and the jails had phone lines installed where in their kiosk they have access to dial directly for free, unrecorded, into the local rape crisis center. So that is what we hope to get for all of the facilities now and that is just for support services, not reporting. —Victim service provider

It's my understanding that they go straight to the [statewide coalition], and then, if they can't handle it or they want to disperse out an advocate, then either they do it or they ask one of us. —Victim service provider

## Feedback from Incarcerated People

Incarcerated people reported both internally and externally provided services. Most incarcerated people reported support services from internal mental health units. Regarding externally provided services, about one-third of incarcerated people were unsure whether outside emotional support services were available. Only six incarcerated respondents (21 percent) referenced outside emotional support service providers for their facilities. However, they were unable to specifically identify who or what outside entities provide those services.

It's this staff, like counselors. There's not really a lot of outside help coming into the facility. —Incarcerated person

I'm not aware of any services that come in. —Incarcerated person

I have no idea how they set it up, if somebody, you could have counseling with somebody. I know we have counseling here within the facility, but in terms of accessing that on the outside, I have no idea. —Incarcerated person

Incarcerated people also discussed the types of services available. Internally, most referenced mental health services. However, one person discussed having an on-site doctor and chaplain. External services that incarcerated people mentioned included group programs and a hotline connected to an organization in the community. Lastly, one person reported being able to access services via a local hospital.

Those that need services, there's the doctor, the social worker or mental health. There's the chapel. There's the counselor.... There's also [name of hospital redacted] if you need more support services. —Incarcerated person

## Education on PREA for Incarcerated People

In this section, we share findings around how incarcerated people are made aware of processes for reporting and accessing emotional support services related to sexual abuse.

Incarcerated people learn about their options for reporting sexual abuse and seeking emotional support services through posters in their facilities, orientation at intake, an incarcerated person's handbook/rulebook, routine announcements, and, in some facilities, hearing reminders about PREA on the phone lines. We heard in interviews that information shared about PREA largely involved reporting and was not as focused on accessing emotional support services.

Of our participants, 61 percent said they learned about PREA via posters and announcements, 61 percent via orientation, and 32 percent via a handbook or rulebook.

**TABLE 8**  
**How Incarcerated People Learned about PREA**

	Incarcerated People (N=28)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Source of PREA knowledge</b>		
Posters and announcements	17	61%
Orientation	17	61%
Handbook/rulebook	9	32%

**Source:** Authors' analysis of transcripts and notes from 28 interviews with incarcerated people conducted between November 2022 and October 2023.

**Note:** PREA = Prison Rape Elimination Act.

Regarding posters and announcements, incarcerated people shared that clear signage was available in housing units and in other areas of their facilities. These same announcements are made available in facilities where tablets are provided to incarcerated people.

There's also one that has, it just says "PREA" and under it says "there is no time limit to report a PREA." But there's this: "Have you ever been raped, sexually assaulted or harassed?" You can get free private help. Even if what happened was before you got here. You have the right to talk to a trained person from outside of the prison. They can help. —Incarcerated person

Yes, actually about [information near] the phones and they have all the pamphlets there at all times. So you can just always read on it. I'm not sure if it's on the tablet, but it is directly over top of every phone that we use. —Incarcerated person

They have signs all over the place. For everybody it's just something you know after you've been to jail X amount of times, it's just something that you just watch. I watched videos in prison. They make you watch videos like orientation or whatever like when you're coming to prison or a different county. They got just different things, each place is different, and it's just something if you know about PREA here then you know about it.... Everywhere's got it now. I hear about it in every facility but just here is the most adamant about it. —Incarcerated person

Incarcerated people also reflected on the information about PREA provided at orientation, sharing that counselors provided an overview of PREA, how to recognize sexual abuse and harassment, and ways to report it.

I remember the counselors, they were informing everyone who was new to the facility about the PREA and to know that, what we call “What’s Not Tolerated” to be able to recognize the difference if when you are being abused or harassed, and to know what is not tolerated. And to know what I shouldn't tolerate. Like what the facility don't tolerate, and what I shouldn't tolerate. —Incarcerated person

Again, coming in that's really all you hear about. That's all they talk about. When you're coming in the intake, that's one of the first things they mentioned. So really the only thing I've heard about ... around here for the most part is the different ways that you can report sexual assault or violation, so that that's being conveyed more than probably anything else at this facility. Other stuff might sweep under the road but yeah they make a point of informing people how to notify sexual misconduct, harassment, or rape. —Incarcerated person

## Supporting Overlooked Populations

Supporting overlooked incarcerated populations, including people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency, is critical to ensuring they can report sexual abuse and access emotional support services.<sup>15</sup> However, data on the prevalence of these populations in correctional facilities are limited (for example, the number of non-English-speaking people in prisons and jails is unknown). Department of Justice data from 2016 indicate that nearly 40 percent of incarcerated people in state and federal facilities had at least one disability, and that about 10 percent had a hearing disability (Maruschak, Bronson, and Alper 2021). The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates that incarcerated people with disabilities have equal access to programs and activities, as well as to communication access (Vernon and Miller 2005). Despite these provisions, “prisons are largely designed for young, non-disabled, English-speaking males” (Kelly-Corless 2022, citing Cheney 2005), and people who are disabled and are not proficient in English may experience additional harm and deprivation while incarcerated (Kelly-Corless 2022).

People who are deaf or hard of hearing face several obstacles during incarceration, including communication barriers with staff, other incarcerated people, and family on the outside; hostility from staff; and abuse (Tamura and Gunnison 2019). In addition, some of the resources that facilities rely on to facilitate communication with incarcerated deaf and hard-of-hearing people, such as teletypewriters (TTYs), may be out of date (Bialek and Schlanger 2022). Given what is known and still unknown about the experiences of incarcerated deaf, hard-of-hearing, and non-English-speaking

people, this study sought to learn more about how facilities currently support these overlooked populations in reporting and accessing emotional support services while incarcerated.

## **Accessibility Options for Incarcerated Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing People**

Bureau of Prisons staff, correctional leaders and staff, and PREA auditors shared that people who are deaf or hard of hearing have a few ways to report or communicate with others, including via teletypewriters, which an incarcerated person can use to type information in English that is relayed over the phone. Another option is Purple Phones, a service that relies on video relay service where an incarcerated person and an interpreter communicate via American Sign Language over video, as well as phone lines with captions and tablets.

They can request [accessible ways of using the line]. Some of our facilities have the Purple Phone program for our deaf, or they could use the TTY to my knowledge. —Corrections leader or staff member

Maybe you can look into the video relay system that we have here. I think it's called a Purple Phone. But the VRS [video relay service]. Maybe you all can look into that because I believe that phone could dial a regular number if I'm not mistaken, and then you can have a video if you want to have a little video going on or you could just have a regular phone conversation. So I think that maybe you also have a phone accessible such as that that would allow that communication with someone who's deaf or hard of hearing. —Corrections leader or staff member

The tablet system so they could type that out and send it to any phone number, any third party they could. They could give any staff member a written note. We do have deaf services for our phones system as well. So, they do have access to deaf and hard-of-hearing services within our facilities. —Corrections leader or staff member

## **Accessibility Options for Incarcerated Non-English Speakers and People with Limited English Proficiency**

PREA auditors, correctional staff and leaders, community service providers, and some incarcerated people shared that people who do not speak English or who have limited English proficiency have a few options for reporting sexual abuse and seeking emotional support services, such as language lines and/or translators, and TTY lines.

We do have contracted services with interpreters, so if the inmate may need to report, we can have an interpreter get involved with reporting. We have interpreting services as well, and same could read requests, or speak to staff, and set up a translator if they have to interpret. If they have the outside reporting, they could write the letter. What state DOC does with that I would assume that they would at least try to translate, and perhaps meet with them. To access

these different resources with an interpreter would just be an ask. —Corrections leader or staff member

The jails and prisons have both been much more flexible about me bringing in my laptop to work to meet with clients. And so, you know, if you're meeting with someone you can sort of have a translator via Zoom on our help line. We do that [via] TTY. —Victim service provider

In addition to using interpretation lines, some facilities and service providers also rely on staff members, particularly those who speak Spanish, to interpret for incarcerated people. Though having BOP and correctional staff serve as interpreters provides a reporting avenue for people who would otherwise have limited access, it also results in a lack of confidentiality in reporting and receiving emotional support services.

We have access to a bilingual staff on both sides, but we also have a language line that if we need to call some external partner to do interpretation or provide us with interpretation skills that is available. Thankfully, those occurrences are rare because we do have bilingual staff. —Correctional leader or staff member

We have translators at our organization ready because we have a staff member. —Victim service provider

Many stakeholders mentioned that information about PREA reporting and emotional support services is available in Spanish. Some facilities also have written information translated into other languages, such as Creole.

For [our county], they [incarcerated people] will receive pamphlets through the jail management system intake that will be in English and Spanish. And then we will have English and Spanish signage in all of the housing units reiterating what those lines are. —Corrections leader or staff member

Our policies are written, everything that's inside to the inmate population, is written in English, Spanish, and Creole, which are predominantly [spoken]. So that information, as it pertains to PREA, as individuals being booked or coming into our booking area, that information is conveyed in those three languages. —Corrections leader or staff member

## **Incarcerated People's Perceptions**

About 20 percent of incarcerated people we interviewed were unsure how their facilities currently support those who are deaf or hard of hearing in reporting sexual abuse and accessing support services. This finding falls in line with the general lack of awareness among incarcerated people of the availability of reporting and emotional support service options.

That's a very touchy thing because they don't really take very much of that into consideration here. Either it being a situation of a PREA or a situation of medical or that being a situation they don't have very much access to any other kind of services of those sorts. So, I really couldn't

even tell you. I know it wouldn't be easy access for them at all. I can tell you that. So, I tell you they'd probably be ignored. Yeah, they'd struggle. It'd be a serious struggle for them.  
—Incarcerated person

Some incarcerated people were able to share how their facilities support those who are deaf or hard of hearing, including using interpretation lines and interpreters and providing unique phone lines that deaf or hard-of-hearing people can use to contact family and others. Incarcerated people believed that to access those accommodations to report abuse and access emotional support services, people with a hearing disability would need to disclose their experience to a staff member and receive help from them.

I know someone that is kind of hard of hearing, but they have a phone for hearing their parents if they wanted to do it that way, it wouldn't be a situation or a problem. —Incarcerated person

[People with disabilities cannot access reporting] as easily as people who don't have disabilities. I think they have to tell the workers here if they have that type of disability or they won't know to accommodate them. —Incarcerated person

Nearly one-third of incarcerated people we interviewed were aware of ways their facilities support incarcerated non-English speakers. The most prevalent is signage, particularly in Spanish, about PREA reporting and emotional support services. Some incarcerated people also shared that interpretation services, either on the facilities' phone lines, through third-party providers, or through facility staff, are available to them in their facilities.

They have a poster up also for the Spanish-speaking inmates but as far as the other [languages] I don't know. —Incarcerated person

I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I would think that yes, because it [the phone line] does give the option for Spanish. It has English, then it has Spanish, so if people are speaking English, it has that. It gives that option and it gives that option whenever you pick up the phone to make a phone call it says press 1 for English, press 2 for Spanish. —Incarcerated person

## Challenges with Reporting and Emotional Support Services

According to stakeholders, overarching challenges around reporting and emotional support services include (1) confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy; (2) collaboration between correctional facilities and victim service providers; (3) finding external reporting entities and emotional support service providers; (4) limited and inefficient communication about reporting avenues and emotional support services; (5) false PREA allegations and misuse of reporting and emotional support services; (6) technology issues; and (7) supporting overlooked populations.

## Concerns about Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Privacy

The challenge mentioned in every focus group and interview and with the highest sense of concern was that facilities struggle to provide incarcerated people reporting and emotional support service options that maintain anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. All stakeholder groups (incarcerated people, correctional staff and leaders, PREA auditors, and community service providers) elevated this challenge. PREA Standard 115.51/115.351 requires that incarcerated people be able to remain anonymous upon request when reporting sexual abuse, but many facilities are not able to meet this requirement. PREA Standard 115.53/115.353, moreover, requires that incarcerated people be provided confidentiality when receiving emotional support services.

Confidentiality and anonymity appear to be compromised in many ways during reporting and the provision of emotional support services, according to respondents, including by (1) requiring incarcerated people to use their “inmate ID” when making a phone call or writing a letter; (2) recording phone calls, even those to reporting lines; (3) locating phones in nonprivate areas of correctional facilities where staff and other incarcerated people can overhear conversations; and (4) having correctional officers present during the provision of confidential emotional support services.

Respondents shared that although facilities may provide an outside phone number or hotline to call to report sexual abuse, calling that number sometimes requires an incarcerated person to insert their unique, identifiable PIN number. Even if someone were to request to remain anonymous during a report, their anonymity would be broken by requiring them to insert their PIN number.

I think a lot of agencies don't understand the importance of being able to do it anonymously, or being able to anonymously report, and frequently agencies will have PIN numbers on their telephone systems that require inmates to type in a PIN number which identifies them which defeats the whole purpose, and obviously that's not within the standard. —PREA auditor

Some of the problems we're having are when an inmate wants to call a rape crisis center, but they know they have put their PIN in, well, automatically, confidential and anonymous is out the door. The inmate is obviously feeling they're not confidential no matter what. —PREA auditor

Some facilities have addressed this issue by working with the correctional telephone company to make certain numbers (like the reporting number) not require an incarcerated person to enter their PIN number or not require them to include a return address when making a written report via postal mail. However, even if someone does not enter their PIN number, videotape recordings are ongoing in facilities at all times, and a staff member could review the videotape to see who was by the phone when a reporting call was made. Some PREA auditors reflected that they had heard about this occurring in facilities.

The most common thing you run into is when there's an app and anonymous report comes in let's say from Crime Stoppers or someone.... What happens is the first thing that the lieutenants and sergeants do is go pull the video and see who gets on the phone at that exact time so anonymity is really hard to achieve. And the other thing of course is that the average prison would rather staple their head than have negative information get out. So the first thing they do is go find out who's complaining. And it's not even unusual for them to actually then go to the inmate or the vendor and start giving different kinds of pressure for them to rescind their complaint, so that part is not unusual. —PREA auditor

Another way that confidentiality and privacy are compromised is that most correctional facilities automatically record all phone calls made by incarcerated people on facility phones as a security precaution. Some facilities have set up agreements with their correctional phone providers that they will not automatically record calls made to certain phone numbers, such as hotline reporting numbers. But there are concerns that correctional phone providers may still be recording phone calls.<sup>16</sup>

Most are under the impression that all the phone calls are recorded. So, if all the phone calls are recorded, whether I use my PIN or not, it's not confidential. —PREA auditor

I think that would be the biggest reason why people don't report anything because there's never a private way, because we don't know if it's been—like all our phone calls are recorded.... But at the same time, like I said, a lot of people are afraid to speak up even through the system, even to put in a grievance, because one way or another, the gangs will find out. We'll know who did put the grievance, so that means you're still blinded. —Incarcerated person

Even if incarcerated people do not need to enter their PIN number, phones are typically located in common areas that do not provide them privacy. The very structure of a correctional facility does not allow for much privacy, and respondents elevated this as an issue. Some facilities have put phones in private locations away from other incarcerated people or provided incarcerated people with personal tablets they can use to make phone calls from their cells or even send emails.

But you know, those inmate phone banks? There's no privacy from other inmates either, and I've had a lot when I was running it in my state say, "Why would I call when everybody could hear my business?", you know, even if it wasn't PREA-related or if it was previous sexual abuse or victimization or something different. —PREA auditor

Information spreads like wildfire here. And also wanting to have that trust because we don't necessarily know when we get on the phone if we record it where it's going to go, if it has to go through the person who's over the phone calls or anything like that. And if that information would be, you know, loud by chance. And then I think also, some inmates if someone overhears the conversation because of how close the phones are. —Incarcerated person

Respondents, though, cautioned against having a reporting phone in a dedicated area, as that may also identify someone. Because there is stigma attached to being a survivor of sexual abuse and to reporting abuse (or "snitching," as some may consider it), this may be an even more dangerous reporting option for incarcerated people.



For us, our inmate phones are in the general population. So, we have open dorms where there's three phones mounted on the walls as far as when we do walkthroughs, or when you're watching them and their units, you'll see individuals who have the blanket draped over their head while they're talking to loved ones. So, I think that they find ways to be private, but without changing infrastructure a lot, and moving those phones around. There's not an easy way to create a private space without those red flags of "that's the PREA phone...." You make sure it's not a phone that's only for that, because then everybody knows what that phone call is. So, because it's with the inmate phones that anybody can use for any phone call, I think it doesn't draw attention to it. So that helps. —Corrections leader or staff member

Incarcerated people even expressed hesitation toward the option of writing reports, because incarcerated people and staff may be able to access and read those reports, or the reports may end up in the wrong hands.

They have call cards in [county name redacted]. So you write a call card out and you would run a call current out and say that like, you know, or something like that and you stick it in the door or whatever way for the decks to come by and get it. But see the girls in there, they'll pull call cards out of the door and read them because if you're being bullied or something you put a cloak card in the door or whatever they don't come and they'll see that. They're just always in somebody else's business. They don't have no safe way to really report in [county name redacted]. —Incarcerated person

Most of them don't [submit kite messages] because sometimes the kites actually go to wrong rooms. So another inmate can get that kite and read it and be like, "What?" Yes, so whoever when they sort out mail or [something]. They don't give the person the kite, they put it on their bed or accidentally give them the wrong mail and then another person reads it and then that person and inmate tells another person like, "Hey I just got this kite and it's not even mine and this is what it says." —Incarcerated person<sup>†</sup>

Lastly, stakeholders shared that confidentiality is broken when correctional officers are required to be present during emotional support service provision. Service providers noted this as an issue when reflecting on challenges in ensuring confidentiality for incarcerated survivors. Some corrections staff reported that in instances of service provision, such as during a SANE exam at a hospital, they need to be present, citing security concerns. Providers reported that they have also had issues with corrections staff being present during in-person meetings, which does not allow for confidential provision.

[Service providers are] not security-minded obviously so when we go, we're trying to work out the parts of getting to the hospital, and then being the liaison there. "We [service providers] need to be alone in the room with them." Well, you can't be in the room alone with them. We

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<sup>†</sup> In corrections facilities, kites are official handwritten messages that incarcerated people can send to corrections staff. They are similar to physical mail or letters.

[corrections staff] have to be in there for security purposes. —Corrections leader or staff member

A concern that I've seen in a lot of places is just having the balance between an inmate being able to talk to somebody in a confidential manner in a private setting while still meeting security needs. Where they're not having too much access to a computer or a phone system or something and that I've seen as a challenge is making sure we strike that balance. —PREA auditor

The hotline that we used was confidential whenever it was operating. It was just to get it operationalized. That was an issue. And I have no way of proving it was confidential, either. That's part of the problem, too. But I do know that a lot of the staff with the state program didn't quite understand PREA. They didn't get enough education on confidentiality. They don't understand. Advocates are to adhere to confidentiality. And so, I would have correctional staff show up when I'm meeting an incarcerated client and think that they could sit next to us and things like that. I would try to explain, but I can't force somebody to leave, so there's still a lot of education around confidentiality that I think probably needs to take place. —Victim service provider

## **Collaboration between Correctional Facilities and Victim Service Providers**

Victim service providers and correctional leaders and staff agree that they have opposing approaches when dealing with incarcerated survivors, which leads to collaboration challenges. Each group reported that the other is less aware of how it operates. For example, correctional leaders and staff reported that victim service providers are not always “security-minded” and victim service providers reported that correctional practices are not always trauma informed.

I know that in working with the YWCA and trying to get this MOU going, not only for reporting, but to continue with support services and for that kind of stuff it's just lack of understanding. They don't necessarily understand what we deal with and how we get reports .... They want to go everything hard a hundred and fifty percent. And I get that. I get their side, but some of it is not necessary, as far as what they want, so I think it should come to terms that that everybody's on the same page is probably the hardest with [an] outside agency. —Corrections leader or staff member

When you yell at these fifteen people, yelling might be triggering over here to this one person, so do you still yell at everybody and have this person triggered and then you have to wonder why you're having to deal with extra time with this person that would have been not necessarily triggered. If you wouldn't have been yelling in the first place, or if you had to limit the yelling, I don't know. Yelling is a big thing for people, that yelling is a big thing. Yeah, more so than putting your hands on. And a lot of people have a lot of childhood trauma from yelling. —Victim service provider

We all have the same goal. Obviously, we all want the support services, and we want that to go as planned, you know, as best as it can. But there are certain things that we have to come to terms with. —Corrections leader or staff member

Correctional facilities and service providers also struggle to establish and maintain formal partnerships under MOUs. Corrections staff, auditors, and providers reported tensions between providers and corrections not wanting to work together, resulting in a lack of partnerships or in partnerships being discontinued.

We have had MOUs in the past with two other outside advocacy centers. But within the past I don't know, maybe year, year and a half, they have dropped the MOU process and they didn't want to continue that care with us. So since then, we've been reaching out to other advocacy centers to see if they wanted to enter into some MOUs. I have yet to have an agency that says that they have the capacity to do so, or that they are wanting to interact with this population.  
—Corrections leader or staff member

Correctional leaders and staff and PREA auditors shared that sometimes victim service providers do not want to work with incarcerated people because they believe incarcerated people may be “rapists” and criminal and are therefore a risk to their nonincarcerated clients.

One of the very first challenges that we've received...was in one of our more rural areas. We had a problem with the emotional support, the rape crisis center not wanting to work with us and take calls because they were worried that inmates, or residents in our facility, would be the rapists of the victims that are actually already servicing, and that that would be a conflict of interest for that if anything was to happen to them. I mean it was very far-fetched, but they were so very worried about it, and very concerned about working with us in that way. —PREA auditor

Furthermore, some stakeholders reasoned that being in a rural location and far from local service providers was the root cause of not having an MOU with a local partner. Others reported that MOUs had expired and did not provide a reason why they were not renewed.

Victim service providers also shared their perspective that corrections staff sometimes misunderstand PREA, the role of service providers, and how to respond to victimization. One provider discussed how a client was placed in a cell with a person who was sexually abusive and felt unable to report the sexual abuse as it was happening in the facility:

We've got a person that sexually assaulted somebody that went behind bars and while they were waiting on a next court date, they put them in a two-man cell, and it's three people in there. And this person that had sexually assaulted somebody on the outside has now sexually assaulted somebody on the inside and everybody knew what this guy had been accused of, and how horrible and horrific it was. They put him in the cell with these other people and didn't have the right operating equipment, so that they couldn't ask for help when they needed it. And he brutally sexually assaulted somebody in there and scared the other guy that was in the two-man cell, all three of them. So, one is raping someone, one is being raped, and the other one is cowering in the corner screaming out of the bars for help and all of the guards heard him screaming, and no one did anything. If somebody would have said, “How can I help you? What can I do?” instead of laughing and not taking them seriously, that might have alleviated some of the ‘horrificity’ of the assault, or the attack. —Victim service provider

Providers also reported that corrections staff and auditors may not be fully aware that reporting and service provision are separate PREA standards—meaning that although they provide the services in the aftermath of victimization, they are likely not the reporting entity:

We work very, very hard to make sure that folks understand we are not the reporting agency, but I will also say that this is one of our biggest struggles with the facilities because they don't understand, I don't think auditors even understand that. Because if you read some of the audits, the you know, narratives after each section, you know, so we work very hard to delineate that we are not the reporting service, but I would say there is mass confusion around that issue. And that's part of what we're trying to work on. —Victim service provider

Lastly, providers talked about how some incarcerated survivors have had to pay for calls to external service agencies.

## **Finding External Reporting Entities and Emotional Support Service Providers**

The majority of stakeholders reported difficulty finding entities to serve as reporting agencies and to deliver emotional support services that can comply with correctional facilities' security policies and protocols and with contractual barriers.

It is a correctional facility, so there are a lot of security concerns, so “outside entity” needs to be well-defined, case-by-case basis, so it's hard to define it that way. The administration is willing to work with outside parties, but they have to be vetted appropriately, clear certain security assessments. I don't think we have major issues with outside entities, but are they coming to our institution? If so, they'd have to be vetted to enter the secure confines for an interview. Our setup here offers multiple levels of reporting and multiple levels of review, so I'm confident in our system. We do a rather good job in providing those services. We're always looking to improve, but when you say “outside entity,” it would have to be well-defined and that we would be able to vet prior to. —Corrections leader or staff member

The vendor as well as this office here sitting down, coordinating contractual barriers may prohibit us from being able to be as immediate. And those are the things that will probably be a challenge moving forward. But certainly we are aware, keenly aware of what we need to do and the sheriff has set that mandate, it's just a matter of us being able to get the contractual aspect of it and the development of that phone line as well as the establishment of the outside entity. Like I said, we've had some dialogue with an outside entity, but the follow-up is something that we've got to be a little bit more specific of and we've changed some personnel. —Corrections leader or staff member

Another reason for the difficulty of finding partners for external emotional support services is the limited capacity among, and funding for, victim service providers to support incarcerated survivors. Stakeholders from jails reported that the majority of their programs are run by volunteers, and finding volunteers interested in providing emotional support services for incarcerated survivors proves challenging. Relatedly, stakeholders from women's facilities reasoned that local rape crisis centers do

not always have the funding to provide services in corrections or that their funding streams do not allow for such provision. In addition, stakeholders from women's prisons and youth detention centers remarked on the challenges of getting service providers to provide services after hours or on weekends. If there is an emergency during these times and a survivor needs mental health services or hospital accompaniment, it can be difficult to find a service provider in a timely manner.

I also think resources may be an issue, having someone to come in and do these groups. I think that'll be a major issue for us for programming, because we have to find someone first who's willing to come in and who's interested in the topic to come in and provide that support so aside from space custody levels, the resources would be an issue. —Correctional leader or staff member

It's [the number of victim service staff who are able to provide services to incarcerated survivors] gotten better in the last five or eight years or so. But some of the rape crisis centers, their funding sources, and their grant sources would not allow them to provide services to incarcerated individuals. And so, I think, having the availability of something. Because you know, so I said a lot of the smaller places they don't have the staffing and they're doing good to manage you know what they're doing on a regular basis in the community. So, to have that additional workflow I think it's a real struggle for a lot of them. —PREA auditor

Importantly, victim service providers agree that their organizations have limited staffing and resources to work with incarcerated survivors. Providers reported being understaffed. They discussed how they do not always have the capacity to give incarcerated survivors the attention and care needed because they are overwhelmed with other responsibilities. Providers also reported that they simply cannot meet some of incarcerated survivors' needs. For example, sometimes survivors need money on their books, and victim service providers are not at liberty to provide such assistance.

I feel like it should be the coalitions that are driving this, you know, when it comes to getting the jails in order, getting the prisons to follow some in that type of thing. Because we just don't have the time, I'm just thinking about what I, what we all have on our plates, I don't feel like I could fully give this the attention that I know that is needed for the survivors that are incarcerated because they do deserve that. They deserve to have someone do this and do it the right way. And fully. I just don't know if I have the capacity or other programs like mine have the capacity to do this because we're a pretty big agency. When it comes to some of the other sexual assault providers, and I know that the smaller ones would definitely not have the capacity to do this. —Victim service provider

An active correctional staffing crisis across the United States does not help these challenges. Many facilities are significantly understaffed and strapped to cover basic duties, which then affects service providers' ability to work with corrections and deliver services.

Corrections is under siege, I mean in here in [state redacted]. Offices are working four to five additional shifts, which are mandatory per week. And that's not uncommon right now nationwide. And I think if you look at any of the jails or prisons that you're currently serving corrections, officers have just any exorbitant number of tasks to do. And I'm not making an

excuse because I don't want to make an excuse for corrections, but I mean, bear in mind that they're under, you know, just egregious circumstances, and I think that's another factor that we have to consider. —Victim service provider

Facility staffing is also a big issue. There have been multiple times where I go into the facility to lead a group and they don't have enough security staff to support the group, which causes frustration for the group members and me. This happens eight out of ten times. Groups will be canceled due to lack of corrections staff able to provide security. People also don't know about our services. —Victim service provider

## Limited and Inefficient Communication about Reporting Avenues and Emotional Support Services

Stakeholders also reflected on the challenge of limited and inefficient communication about reporting options or available emotional support services. Incarcerated people learn about their options for reporting sexual abuse and seeking emotional support services through posters in their facilities, orientation at intake, handbooks and rulebooks, routine announcements, and, in some facilities, reminders about PREA on the phone lines. We heard in interviews that information shared about PREA was largely about reporting and not as much about accessing emotional support services.

Stakeholders reported challenges with these education methods, such as posters being ripped down and outdated information being disseminated. PREA auditors in particular shared concerns about posters detailing reporting options not providing clear information for incarcerated people. For instance, one auditor saw a poster that provided this information, but the poster did not share that the phone number was for an internal staff member at the correctional facility. Incarcerated people could have misinterpreted that number as an external one.

One of the challenges that I'm seeing, and this is both juvenile and adult, so I'll just say for both is when they post it, it's ripped down, you know, unless it's like a permanent post. When it's paper, it's ripped down and it's a continual challenge. They place it in the handbook, but you know as well as I do, both the juvenile and adult just throw away the handbook. —PREA auditor

Victim service providers also raised concerns about whether incarcerated people are aware of their services, as they rarely receive calls or requests for services from them, and concerns about only being able to provide services based on who staffs a facility.

We never got a single call from the youth facility, and that really worried me after five years, and not getting a single call from the youth. So, I knew there were problems with the hotline, but it was difficult to find any sort of accountability to make sure that it was operational, and so that's when we decided to back out. They won't honor some of the MOU information, and they're there just so everybody feels like they're just, it's just to check a box. Yes, we have a hotline, and that's it. —Victim service provider

We do hospital accompaniment, though in five years the state prison has only called me one time to come for a hospital accompaniment, and I know that and I have been called in and other assaults, but they've only called me the one time. —Victim service provider

We learned from our conversations with incarcerated people that about one-third did not know whether any outside emotional support services were available, confirming victim service providers' suspicions. Six respondents referenced outside emotional support services providers for their facilities, but they were unable to identify who or what entities provide those services.

Upon request, you can request, or I mean if it happens then, you can get services. I mean here inside services, but I've never seen any outside services. —Incarcerated person

It's this staff like counselors. There's not really a lot of outside help coming into the facility. —Incarcerated person

I have no idea how they set it up if somebody, you could have counseling with somebody. I know we have counseling here within the facility, but in terms of accessing that on the outside, I have no idea. —Incarcerated person

## Concerns about False Reports and Misuse of Reporting Avenues

Four out of five stakeholder groups raised concerns about false reports and misuse of reporting avenues by incarcerated people. Notably, community service providers did not elevate this as a concern. We learned from respondents that the motivation behind false PREA allegations often includes someone wanting to have an incarcerated peer or staff member removed from a unit. Furthermore, someone may report incidents via PREA if the grievance system where they are incarcerated is slow to respond or ineffective, because they know that a facility will respond promptly to a PREA allegation.

In this facility, I personally know people that have had PREA called on them and it was false reporting and people will use it to move to a different housing unit to get housed with their girlfriends or whatever they want to do. And there's not a lot of care for the impact that happens to the person that has that put on them. So, I know that's a pretty big issue here. —Incarcerated person

Some inmates do manipulate the system just because they know we have to separate, that staff cannot have any direct contact with that inmate while the investigation is still pending. —Corrections leader or staff member

Some stakeholders also mentioned nuances around what they described as consensual relationships, meaning relationships in which two incarcerated people in a facility may be romantically involved. A relationship may be consensual, but after a fight or breakup, one of the people involved in the relationship may report a PREA incident. Furthermore, some facilities do not interpret romantic or

sexual relationships between two incarcerated people as consensual, and staff there may submit PREA reports regarding such relationships.

In this prison a lot of people can call PREA on somebody because like right now a girl broke up with a girl so she called PREA on her and now the girl is in PC [protective custody]. Just the other girl left her, now she's going to get charged up because she doesn't want to be with the girl. —Incarcerated person

God forbid they see two people kissing, consensual or not. Then you know they're calling, they're gonna follow PREA and they're gonna lug them. That's what they call it. They call [it] lugging it, they're going to take them from here and bring them to the pods. —Incarcerated person

In the case of incarcerated transgender people, applying PREA becomes complicated. One incarcerated person shared with us that transgender men are incarcerated at a women's facility, presenting a high level of anxiety for transgender people that someone will file a PREA report on them simply for using the bathroom made available to them in the housing unit.

I won't even go into our bathrooms in our unit because I'm terrified of it, being a transgender individual. I mean, I'm not using [public] bathrooms anyway, but I worry about that, you know, because there's only I think three of us in here. Three transgender people. And they all identify as men, we identify as male. Right. And you know. Right, yeah, there's three of us that are on testosterone. We look male and sometimes the girls are kind of aggressive, sexually and if you deny them, they will threaten to call PREA on you. I will not go anywhere [that] there's not a camera. —Incarcerated person

## Technology Issues

The last challenge shared by stakeholders involved technology issues associated with reporting. These include connectivity issues (hotlines and reporting numbers not working) and functionality issues (facilities' phones and tablets not enabling reporting). Importantly, some tribal facilities do not have internet connectivity, which increases these challenges.

The phones that they have [in this facility], the numbers that they want people to call don't work. The hotline doesn't work. Like the number doesn't work at all. The hotline for depression or PREA, they don't work because I was literally talking to a friend of mine who's a lifer here and she's like the hotlines aren't, they don't even work because she called it and they wouldn't, it just wouldn't go through. It wasn't working. So that's not working here. —Incarcerated person

The setup that we had wouldn't really work for that [reporting and receiving services via phone], because these phones don't dial out. And the way it works is when we do use those lines, the attorney or the services calling, they have to call in to one of our lines, and then we transfer it to that red phone for the offender to answer and begin their meeting. —Corrections leader or staff member



## Challenges Incarcerated People Experience Reporting Sexual Abuse and Accessing Emotional Support Services

We heard several challenges that incarcerated people experience when reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services. Overarching challenges include (1) shame, fear, and embarrassment around reporting and seeking help; (2) limited confidentiality and privacy; (3) a lack of responsiveness and appropriate responses from staff; and (4) unavailable reporting and services options. In addition, though this was not explicitly shared as a challenge, we noted a general lack of awareness among incarcerated people about available reporting avenues and emotional support services.

Incarcerated people discussed how sexual abuse and harassment can be difficult for some people to share, which can pose a challenge in accessing emotional support services. Sexual abuse is difficult enough to report in the community, given the stigma, shame, and embarrassment that comes with it. This difficulty heightens in a correctional environment with a high level of surveillance, limited privacy, and distinct power structures at play.

Probably scared of saying it out loud or reporting it. It's just some people that's actually been through [it]. It's harder to speak about it so some people just keep it to themselves.... Probably more mental challenges getting through it emotionally and being incarcerated and some, like I said, the inmates don't make it easier sometimes. —Incarcerated person

Some people are just scared. Because the life experiences—and understand the prior thing inside, but a lot of victims are victims on the outside...and being scared for being a victim on the outside. Like I'm a victim from the outside. And on the outside I wasn't one of those people that will go to the cops. So, if I was ever a victim on the inside, I wouldn't be thinking about telling the cops anything. —Incarcerated person

As discussed above, limited confidentiality and privacy were serious concerns for all the stakeholders we spoke with, including incarcerated people. Incarcerated people expressed fear of someone finding out that they reported or sought emotional support services and the potential retaliation that could occur from staff or other incarcerated people as a result.

I think that would be the biggest reason why people don't report anything because there's never a private way, because we don't know if it's been—like all our phone calls are recorded. —Incarcerated person

There was a recent situation that I shared, I don't know how the information was out but some information had got out that this particular person had reported an incident and a lot of people knew and there were mixed feelings among people. I feel like that's not fair to the person because you don't want to shame somebody because they did speak up. Whether it happened or it didn't, they should still have that right to be able to do that in secrecy, in private. So, I would say that I guess for some people it works, for others maybe not so much maybe, I don't

know the situation. I don't know if this person confided in other people and that's how it got out but I know that the information was out there and people knew. —Incarcerated person

Some incarcerated people, however, shared that privacy was provided and staff were responsive to requests for confidentiality and privacy.

You can do it on the phone confidentially or you can go to any of the staff members here are helpful. Yeah. So, unless the person's walking over to the door they really have no reason to be over there around the screen watching what you're doing. So, I mean, it's kind of, they've been smart, locate or placing of it. But I'd probably say that's the most discrete way. —Incarcerated person

What they do here, if someone really needs to use the tablet or use the phone to do that, they do it. They don't hesitate, they respond quickly, they respond professionally, they take that note, they take it seriously, they do. So, if someone needs to talk to somebody confidentially, they make sure that their individual was able to get in contact with what they need to get in contact with prompting. So, what they're doing is basically working, so I don't see anything else needs to be done. Smart staff here, that's for sure. —Incarcerated person

Another challenge is that correctional, medical, and counseling staff are sometimes not responsive to incarcerated people's reports or their requests for emotional support services. Incarcerated people shared that staff do not make the time to understand and meet incarcerated people's needs. Some incarcerated people described reporting systems in which staff members do not properly handle their reports, leading to the reports being unresolved or to correctional staff or incarcerated people finding out about them.

I want to say discrimination, but they're just so uneducated and a lot of the things that we give. Like for instance, I've been diagnosed with PTSD and when I was in diagnostic and evaluation, she basically told me that since I didn't go to war, I couldn't have PTSD. Well, I've been raped. I've had childhood trauma. So, to have someone tell me that I don't have trauma, it's like you know you're going to be battling something, you know, with the system, it's an uphill battle. Yeah and I know I'm not doing something, you know, with the system. And I know I'm not the only one that has run into that where it's like I know I need help, I know I need certain things. But you're not even going to acknowledge that I have an issue? Yes, that was our psychiatrist. That's one who determines what programming we need if we're high risk. —Incarcerated person

The last challenge shared was a lack of availability of reporting options and emotional support services. We heard of incidents when reporting hotlines did not work and certain services were not made available to incarcerated people. Most correctional facilities are experiencing significant staffing crises with security positions and medical/mental health positions, which is an important context.

The hotline doesn't work. Like the numbers don't work at all. The hotline for depression or PREA, they don't work because I was literally talking to a friend of mine who's a lifer here and she's like the hotlines aren't, they don't even work because she called it and they wouldn't, it just wouldn't go through. It wasn't working. —Incarcerated person

Most people don't use them [the services] because they're put on the back burner so much. So, I mean. Some of us, you know, like the transgenders, we have to go every month, but there's other people that want the services but they just, they can't get them. —Incarcerated person

There's one mental health [counselor] and it's so hard to get into because there's so many people and one counselor. —Incarcerated person

## Challenges in Supporting Overlooked Populations

We asked stakeholders, including incarcerated people, about how people who are deaf or hard of hearing, have a disability, have limited English proficiency, or do not speak English can access reporting and emotional support services. Across these populations, there are challenges that match up to previously mentioned challenges for the general population, including (1) a lack of awareness of options, (2) a lack of availability of interpretation services, (3) compromising of confidentiality, and (4) mistreatment of these overlooked populations.

Although some correctional leaders and staff and PREA auditors were able to share about accommodations for incarcerated people who are deaf or hard of hearing, many were unable to speak in much detail about the availability and delivery of these accommodations. One correctional staff member was unable to share how their facility supports those who are hearing impaired because they did not believe they had had anyone in the facility with that disability.

We haven't had nobody [who has had a hearing impairment or is blind].... So, that'd be something I'm going to have to look into, because we've never had no one like that. —  
Corrections leader or staff member

Stakeholders shared that facilities struggle to provide the appropriate services. Even when facilities have language lines and interpretation services available, some PREA auditors expressed frustration with how some do not appropriately use these services for incarcerated people who need them.

I've run into recently in a couple of states for sign language interpretation, things of that nature. It's much more challenging and a lot of large agencies have the ability on their end to permit somebody to use, like the Purple Phone for sign language or whatnot. But finding a service provider that can respond back in sign language can be an issue. —PREA auditor

I've seen where facilities have the resources, like they'll have the language line, and everything. But when I actually go in during the intake process and I'm like, okay, I'm a person that's deaf or I'm a person that might speak Vietnamese and the intake worker doesn't know how to make that connection to the resources. That the agency has made the resources, but the training has not been adequate for those resources to be accessed, so that that's kind of what I've seen. They're there, but, and it could be the one [agency], that it had everything...sign language,

whatever you needed. But when I asked the intake worker to utilize those services, they had no clue. —PREA auditor

The biggest struggle is with your limited-English-proficient incarcerated persons. A lot of places have a language line that they should be utilizing to translate, but I have found that sometimes people assume that they speak a little bit of English, so they don't need to use the translation line. And trying to explain on an audit is if they're speaking English, they may not fully understand because there's that different dialect, there's different terms. And while they may be able to kind of communicate, do they fully comprehend what's being said back to them? And I don't feel that agencies as a whole that I've audited are using the translation lines as frequently as they should be. —PREA auditor

Stakeholders also expressed concerns about confidentiality for this population. These concerns primarily involved whether these incarcerated people could access reporting and emotional support services confidentially, given the different accommodations they need. For example, incarcerated people believed that an incarcerated person with a disability would have to disclose that disability to someone in their facility to receive the appropriate accommodations or rely on someone else to access the service line for them.

I don't really know how somebody, unless they had help by somebody else that was incarcerated with them, for somebody blind or somebody that's deaf. I don't really know how they would. I don't know. They'd have to have help from somebody. —Incarcerated person

Other stakeholders expressed concerns about incarcerated deaf and hard-of-hearing people feeling embarrassed about their disability and not wanting to disclose it to a correctional staff member. If incarcerated people cannot feel safe disclosing their disability, they may not receive the accommodations necessary to report safely and confidentially. At the same time, reaching out for these accommodations means a staff member or another incarcerated person might learn what they seek to report or receive services for.

That [developing a line for people with disabilities or limited English proficiency] would probably be more tough.... Probably to let their disability be known to the counselor, so they know which way is best for them, which way to go. Because a lot...some people don't like to express their disability or "I can't read" or "I can't see or hear." Some people are ashamed of that so they don't let people know, but probably through their counselor so they know which way to help them. —Incarcerated person

If somebody doesn't know how to read, they're not going to say anything. They're too embarrassed. They're too all of that. But with a handicap, the only thing that I've seen is to take them to a private location, where they're not outed. I've seen them, where the staff will take them somewhere else where other people won't see that they're making that phone call. I've seen that and I've asked that question. "Well, how's this person going to make the phone call?" You know, how's a blind person going to make the call? How do you handle that? One state I know had, and I can't remember which state it is, had braille, and they put the braille near the phone, or something that they had. I just can't remember all the logistics of it, but they actually had braille, and so I thought that they really did a good job by going, you know, beyond that. As

far as the deaf, obviously with the TTY and I'm trying to think of you know, what else? But that's pretty much what I've seen out there that is an issue, and the issue again is going to be about the confidentiality, that they're not able to and obviously they don't want to talk to or write to another inmate about it because they're afraid. That's another issue, that they're scared. —PREA auditor

The same challenge applies to people with limited English proficiency or who cannot speak English. One auditor, one community service provider, and BOP staff members mentioned that confidentiality may be compromised while trying to support non-English-speaking people because they would need a staff member to help them access the language line, which would make what they were reporting or seeking to discuss on the phone clear to staff. In addition, the actual interpretation services platform, such as a TTY, may not be confidential.

The problem is if I'm an LEP [limited-English-proficient] inmate, and I'm trying to make a confidential call to an outside entity to report a concern because I don't trust the staff, I don't have the capacity to tap into the language line. I need a staff member to do that. And even there it's not going to reach to the outside entity, so that's a barrier. That is really pretty much impossible to overcome without the help of somebody in the institution. There's confidentiality issues that people don't think of the people in the background. So, they could be revealing the identity of other people in the jail, and what's going on in that facility, other people might read the sign. There's a lot there. —PREA auditor

Right now, our disabled inmates really aren't getting a fair shake, and with all the other inmates, they think the same way that, "How do we know it's really confidential, how do I know it's anonymous?" If you're [using the] TTY line, you know it's not anonymous. —PREA auditor

The most common challenge in supporting non-English-speaking people, as identified by stakeholders, is the inability to support those who speak a language besides English or Spanish.

Spanish is pretty much available, but if it's another language that is not, then they have to get an interpreter, and a lot of times they can't get that. So that's one big issue is an interpreter, and I have found, and fortunately, I think because for me I audited at so many different facilities throughout the country, and so many different states, that the language is one thing. Spanish is always going to be available, and yes, you have the brochures, you have the handbook, you've got the posting that's in Spanish. But what are you going to do with the other languages? I've seen in one facility that I was at, and they actually had phone numbers listed where they could call, and it was that particular language. So, I've seen that, where they actually posted it like under the plexi[glass], or by painting it, they had it posted really high, and they were given a pamphlet. —PREA auditor

Anyone who calls our crisis line has total access to [the] language line. But yeah, this would work for incarcerated survivors as well, if they're calling our hotline. If we were doing in-person stuff I am more limited just because I only speak Spanish and we have a large Somali population. But we try really hard to translate all of our documents into other languages, so that they have access to that. But when it comes to in-person stuff, we do have to pull people from [other cities], and then we're more limited on response time. —Victim service provider

## Successes

In addition to challenges, we asked stakeholders about successes in reporting and emotional support services for incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse.

Regarding reporting, stakeholders referred to improvements in phone technology and tablets, the ease of finding a law enforcement agency willing to receive reports, and facilities being able to set up hotlines run by rape crisis centers. PREA auditors noted a marked improvement in correctional phone technology over the years. For example, a small group of correctional facilities have adapted their phone technology to allow for anonymity by not requiring users to enter PIN numbers when dialing certain numbers and even allowing facility telephones to connect to certain 1-800 numbers, such as hotlines operated by rape crisis centers.

I've been over in the communications contracts for the last five to six years.... I'm no longer in that role, but I have noticed back five years ago [we] couldn't allow for the anonymous calls to be placed, or PINs not to be used. I think as PREA has gotten into more facilities, we've seen that these companies, these vendors are now able to accommodate what we need for PREA. So that's been positive. But there are still some agencies [that] have the older contracts, the older technology, and who aren't able to do that. But it's getting a lot better in the last couple of years. —PREA auditor

Another success around technology has been the increased use of tablets in some correctional facilities. Tablets offer incarcerated people another way to report sexual abuse, and in a way that may feel safer because they can do so from their cells without needing to speak and potentially be overheard by someone else.

One of the maybe positive things that's come out of COVID is a lot of facilities have invested in tablets, and the tablets are linked to their phone accounts now. And before the inmate used to have to use the blue phone on the housing unit in front of forty other people. Now they can go with a little more privacy into their cell to make some of these confidential communications either by phone or some systems that have been set up, email also to different outside agencies, or to the investigator within the facility. —PREA auditor

Now we have the tablets. So, we can go in our rooms and use our tablets and we have access to the phone that way. But, I think that would be probably the biggest thing is the privacy of it. Well now we have the tablets so you can use the phone. We have the wall phones, but when we log in to our tablets that it has like a phone app kind of and it dials exactly as if you're on the wall phone. So now there is more privacy because you have your headphones and you can be away from everybody.... Now that we do have the tablets that it is more private, I think. —Incarcerated person

Some PREA auditors mentioned that facilities embraced virtual delivery of care and enhanced technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as accommodating telehealth visits and purchasing and providing tablets to incarcerated people.

The benefit of COVID is that we've all really embraced the virtual aspects of everything. And so, yeah...you could set up a laptop or something and have this conversation confidential. I hope we keep seeing that in facilities. I hope that doesn't go away. —PREA auditor

I've seen several facilities, different agencies that do the emotional support services in conjunction with mental health. So, the mental health staff will set that up and accommodate those visits, either in person or through telehealth. A lot of agencies are using telehealth now just because of staffing and other things. But that's been very successful in the facilities that seem to use that. —PREA auditor

Regarding emotional support services, service providers, PREA auditors, and correctional leaders and staff referenced the successful building of some partnerships, and the establishment of some MOUs, between corrections and victim service providers.

I'm the advocacy program director for our sexual assault agency, we service [location redacted], and gave me counties and [state redacted], and what our role is for survivors is providing advocacy services. If they have been sexually assaulted, either while incarcerated, or prior to them being incarcerated. And so we work with our service providers. So the prisons that we have our MOUs with, and we coordinate with this to be able to provide those advocacy services if in person, via letters or zoom, slash phone calls. —Victim service provider

PREA auditors mentioned that the training models they had observed were another success. Trainings are essential for facility staff to understand the value of and need for emotional support services and for local victim service providers to understand correctional facilities' security procedures.

In some of the better programs that I have seen, is where there's that cross-training of you know, here's what we expect on a security side but here's also what they expect on an advocacy side and how do we meet in the middle to make sure everything's working for everybody. —PREA auditor

Lastly, some notable successes around reaching overlooked populations included having partner organizations or programs that provide services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Victim service providers shared examples of partnering with an organization that provides advocacy services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and creating a program led by people who are deaf, specifically for domestic violence survivors who are deaf or hard of hearing.

I know usually when we're working with individuals that we don't have someone currently at our agency, that offices offer services for individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing. We work closely with [state coalition organization redacted], I guess you would say, or something like that for individuals with disabilities, but they also have advocates as well. So, we usually refer just because they're better able to service those individuals. They are more familiar with the laws when it comes to individuals with disabilities and stuff like that. And so we do have a close relationship. And I think that that's what we utilize the most to help us when we do have survivors that need care. —Victim service provider

In my program, the [coalition redacted] does have a program called [redacted], which is a deaf-led domestic violence program for deaf and hard-of-hearing folks. And I just know that it's really helpful having a specific program that is staff-led within our organization, that is specific to helping deaf and hard-of-hearing survivors. I know that is difficult to do, but our program is really helpful, because if we have anybody who has those needs, we have a whole program set up and [name redacted], my coworker, who runs that program, has a lot of local and statewide resources under her belt. —Victim service provider

## Promising Practices

Through focus groups and interviews with correctional staff and leaders, PREA auditors, and incarcerated people, we learned of facilities implementing hotlines that facilitate reporting and emotional support services. Below, we highlight some promising examples.

### **A Promising Example of Reporting Externally and Accessing External Services via a Hotline**

At one facility, when an incarcerated person makes a phone call, they are given the option to report sexual abuse or harassment externally by pressing two keys or to receive external services for sexual abuse or harassment by pressing two different keys. One drawback is that confidentiality may be compromised because the phones are in a dorm where several people may be present and are reportedly close to each other. Setting up phones or hotlines in close proximity and in an open dorm may allow other incarcerated people to hear conversations.

Anytime that you go to make a phone call or need to make a phone call, the first thing that comes up on the phone is if you have any concerns with sexual abuse or sexual assault to dial 91 or 92 so it gives you options right off the [phone]. —Incarcerated person

It's about as confidential as whoever may be around because the dorm is open. It's got an open room and there's I think twenty-four beds or something like that. There's three phones that are next to each other. The closest...probably about a few feet away from the first phone. So, I mean, depending on who's over there by the phone or who's listening, that sort of thing, that's going to most likely determine [the confidentiality]. —Incarcerated person

### **Promising Examples of Reporting Externally via Hotlines**

An incarcerated survivor shared that at their jail, when someone wants to report, they can dial “99.” This person reported that they are not required to enter their “inmate ID” to call the 99 number. It was unclear whether external services are available via this number. Incarcerated people at this jail also



reported being able to report externally via their tablet; however, doing so does not guarantee confidentiality because they are required to input their PIN number to access the tablet.

They can call the PREA hotline, 99 the number, you know.... When you hit the call, the 99 number, you don't have to put your inmate number in. —Incarcerated person

There's an extension that you can dial on the phones here and you can do it on the tablets. The tablets allow you private access to these people. Also, you don't have to be in the day room reporting it. Or you can also use the mailbox to write somebody specifically if you have an issue or whatever, that's another way or contact [name redacted], people like that...you have to put in your inmate number to access the tablet. So, without that information, you won't be able to get through. —Incarcerated person

Incarcerated people at one facility reported that there is one phone on the wall that they use to report sexual abuse to a neutral company. The phone number for reporting is posted above the phone in several languages. A possible drawback of this model is that when one phone is designated for PREA-related calls, other incarcerated people will be aware of why someone is using it.

Yes, there's a phone as well. There's one on the wall to report any type of sexual abuse...I believe it is a neutral company that corresponds about the situation that happened to you. I guess it's a company—or a neutral company that will respond to those that are in need.... There's multiple phones next to each other. And above those phones is the number, in Spanish, English, and Creole. —Incarcerated person

Staff at all federal prison facilities and headquarters we spoke with reported that incarcerated people can anonymously report sexual abuse and sexual harassment externally to the Office of Inspector General. They can do so via computer systems that should be available at every BOP facility.

## **Promising Examples of Accessing External Services via Hotlines**

One service provider described the logistics of their hotline for incarcerated survivors. They reported that advocates at a domestic violence shelter respond to a hotline available to incarcerated people. The advocates are trained to work with incarcerated people and can provide services during hotline calls for 15 minutes. One drawback of this model that service providers reported is that 15 minutes is insufficient for providing emotional support services.

They can call us for fifteen minutes, and I won't get the call. It'll go to our hotline, which is within a domestic violence program that's our sister program. They have shelter advocates who answer and are trained to answer the hotline. I did send out a bunch of different trainings to them, for them to watch about how to talk with people who are incarcerated. —Victim service provider

Two service providers reported using third parties to provide hotline advocacy services to people with limited English proficiency. To use a third party, the service provider attempts to get consent from the incarcerated survivor if the language barrier is not too major. After gaining consent, the service provider dials a language line and provides services to the survivor through this third party. The only major drawback of this model is that interpreters may not be trained to provide trauma-informed care to incarcerated survivors.

We use a translation company so we can dial them in and there is eighty-plus languages and it is really easy to access different languages. —Victim service provider

With [the] language line, they have I think a 1-800 number that we call. First of all, if we can get consent from the person calling, we get that first. If there's too much of a language barrier there we have their number pop up on the caller ID and we use that. And then we call [the] language line, and then tell them what language we're needing translation in, and there's always somebody right on. I've never had to wait or anything. There's just always somebody on who speaks both English and whatever other language is there. And then we call them back, and add that into a three-way call, so that I can provide the advocacy and the information then it can be translated. Then they can kind of get their needs met by telling me what's going on and then we can kind of have that back-and-forth conversation. —Victim service provider

## The Usefulness of Implementing a Service Line for Responding to Sexual Abuse in Corrections

We asked stakeholders how a service line could support the reporting of sexual abuse in correctional facilities to external entities or the delivery of external emotional support services. We gave them the option to indicate how it would or would not be beneficial, as we did not want to assume that such a line would be beneficial. Later on in focus groups and interviews, we asked them to describe how the line should be implemented (for instance, whether there should be one line dedicated to each PREA standard, who should receive reports of sexual abuse, whether it should be national or local). Answers to these questions are embedded in the below recommendations for implementing a service line.

**All stakeholders expressed that a service line would help correctional facilities support incarcerated survivors in reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services.** The reasons they cited are summarized below. Only a small group of stakeholders expressed hesitation as to whether a service line would be useful, citing that it may be duplicative of existing resources and create confusion.

According to stakeholders, establishing a service line for reporting sexual abuse externally and accessing external emotional support services would be beneficial for the following reasons:



**Provides** people more privacy and confidentiality when reporting and receiving emotional support services.



**Provides** more options for incarcerated survivors to report externally and receive services.



**Makes** incarcerated people more likely to reach out and seek support given that an external entity would receive reports and provide emotional support services.



**Supports** facilities that either lack resources themselves or do not have robust local resources, such as in rural areas.



**Facilitates and maintains** partnerships between corrections and service providers, while reducing stress on both parties.

Many of the incarcerated people we interviewed believed that a line for reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional services would be useful by allowing for more privacy and confidentiality, as well as providing more options. Similarly, system stakeholders shared that providing more avenues to report, especially externally, is helpful because it gives incarcerated people options that may feel more comfortable for them. Stakeholders also shared that having an external entity receive reports and provide emotional support services could make incarcerated people more likely to reach out and seek that support. Some victim service providers shared that they believed an external, national-level line would increase comfort for incarcerated survivors.

I do think that maybe a support crisis [line] would be kind of good for the outside because some people like to talk to someone that's not actually here, you know. Sometimes it's easier to talk to a stranger than it is those that are right here and around you because some people feel like they're being judged and things of that sort. So, sometimes it possibly may be easier for those people that have those problems or issues. —Incarcerated person

I think it would help some facilities, just because I'm sure you've heard this from other institutions. They don't want to tell somebody in the facility right? They would rather report it to where they feel like their voice is being heard, even though their voice is being heard inside of our facilities. But you always have that fear that are they going to tell somebody, right? And so, I think when they report it to an outside individual that they know they can confirm or believe to themselves that that's going to be called back into somebody versus "I'm going to go tell the corporal that [is] standing in the yard." And I'm hoping that they go report it to the shift supervisor, which they are, they're supposed to report those things, but I can see where that level of fear from that inmate may be there when it comes to that piece of it, and I think—and they do report it to the ombudsman's office quite often. So, they do trust that outside line. —Corrections leader or staff member

Stakeholders also shared that a service line would be useful because many communities do not have enough resources to meet survivors' needs and even fewer organizations are dedicated to supporting incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse. Establishing a service line would support facilities

that may not have local resources and serve as a supplement while those communities work to build necessary local resources. Having additional resources is especially relevant for rural, more geographically isolated, areas that may not have as much support infrastructure.

Currently we only have one organization providing services statewide and our southern region is the only area where they can actually have in-person meetings. So, if we were able to have a line that they could call, in addition to our current advocate, that would assist in providing more support services that are available for not only victims of sexual abuse and confinement, but those who have history of sexual victimization that are now dealing with trauma. —Corrections leader or staff member

I think that there are so many facilities out there, concentrated in rural areas, who don't have access or don't have consistent good access that the service line could really be an incredible benefit in those facilities. Certainly, face to face is preferred, but having a service line like this to an external party, to me, would be extremely beneficial. And the other thing I'd add too is that as inmates and residents were able to contact that line, and others were able to see there weren't any kind of repercussions.... Trust in that line could build, that's my opinion. —PREA auditor

PREA auditors and service providers shared that having a service line could facilitate relationships between correctional facilities and victim service providers (something stakeholders noted has been a challenge). Creating a line with dedicated funding would reduce the stress of establishing and maintaining those relationships for both parties, especially in light of high staff turnover in both workforces. Lastly, staff and leaders at youth facilities shared that a line would reduce staff responsibilities, which would be beneficial given the correctional staffing crisis. Creating a line would allow security staff to focus on their primary responsibilities and refer incarcerated people to experts better equipped to support survivors of sexual abuse.

I think it would help facilities a lot. I think that it's rough on them, you know, I do. I think it's rough on them to keep the MOUs current and keep those relationships fresh with those providers in those agencies. I just think it would be really helpful putting the infrastructure for it together. —PREA auditor

I think the major issue for the jails that are in [state redacted], [is] that it's just very hard to find a pinpoint person to make these relationships or build this trust. And so, as you know, there's just high turnover and a lot of things. And so, you really want to make the relationship with the jail versus a person. But it's hard when you don't have someone that you can pinpoint, that kind of handles all things PREA-related well.... Feel like if there was a national hotline or a regional line, maybe it would force them to be so serious about this. —Victim service provider

I think staff would be relieved. I think, yeah, when somebody reports that to you, you're just, you know. Sometimes it's really new staff, and you don't know what to do. I think good advice from somebody outside the facility is great. I know staff would follow through with it, no matter what I think. This definitely gives them another resource and puts it in the right hand. —Corrections leader or staff member

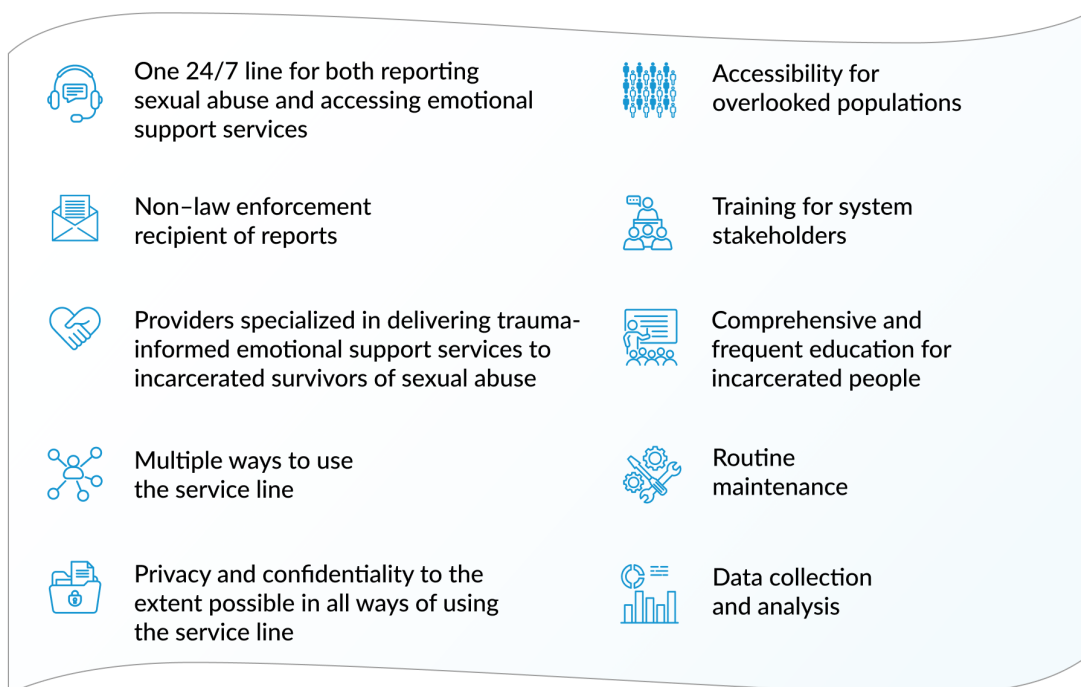
# A Blueprint and Recommendations for Implementing a Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Given what we learned from conversations with 165 people, including PREA auditors, victim service providers, incarcerated people, and correctional leaders and staff, we believe it would be useful to establish a service line to help incarcerated people report sexual abuse to, and access emotional support services from, external entities. Below we share a blueprint and recommendations for establishing such a service line.

We recommend four potential models for implementing the service line. We recognize there are benefits and disadvantages to each model and lay those out in our recommendations. Regardless of which model is used, however, the line must have certain core components. **We recommend that the service line be piloted on a small scale before being fully implemented. The pilot period will be necessary to refine certain components of the service line and ensure full functionality before full implementation.**

## Necessary Components of a Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors

*The 10 necessary components of a service line for reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services for incarcerated people are as follows:*





## Component 1. One 24/7 Line for Both Reporting Sexual Abuse and Accessing Emotional Support Services

Based on what we learned from conversations with key stakeholders, **we recommend establishing one service line through which incarcerated survivors can both report sexual abuse to an external entity and access external emotional support services.** We recommend that when an incarcerated survivor calls the service line, they are answered by a voice-recorded pathway that explains what reporting and receiving emotional support services involves and then directs them to select “option 1” for reporting or “option 2” for emotional support services. The voice-recorded pathway will briefly explain important information, such as callers’ rights under PREA and important effects of reporting (such as investigation that will follow).

**We also recommend that at least two live people (one for the reporting option and one for the support services option) be available 24/7 to answer the phone after incarcerated survivors have navigated through the voice-recorded pathway and respond to messages sent to the line via other platforms (e.g., via text messaging).** It will be important to ensure that incarcerated people are given enough time to speak with the live operator recipients (people may need different amounts of time depending on their needs) while not attracting unwanted attention (for instance, by being on the phone for an unusually long time).

We believe there are many benefits to creating one service line for both reporting abuse externally and accessing external services, including the following:

**Simplicity.** Having one central phone number to call will make that number easier for incarcerated people and staff to remember. The main argument from all stakeholders for having one line was to simplify the process and reduce confusion for the incarcerated population. Stakeholders shared that having two lines may confuse people and cause them to call the wrong one. One phone number will also make it easier to disseminate and educate incarcerated people and staff about.

If somebody's in distress, they're not going to maybe be thinking as clearly as they would on a normal day, and I think having one number to call [and] make that connection with the person who hopefully, on the other end, has a lot of experience and is receiving this information, assessing how they're doing emotionally and then being able to refer. I would think that would be the smoothest way to go about it. —Corrections leader or staff member

That is the hundred-thousand-dollar question, I think. I think if you have two lines, I think inmates will call the wrong line all the time. I think it would be very hard for people to keep it straight. And you'll have people looking for reporting when they're calling the crisis [line] and vice versa. In any kind of closed system like we are, simple is better. Fewer steps that you can give to people. I feel like one line is best. —Corrections leader or staff member

**Efficiency.** With an approach that involves different means of reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services, it is inevitable that incarcerated people will sometimes select the reporting option when they want the emotional support services option, and vice versa. Having one service line for both reporting and emotional support services will allow callers to be directed to the correct option. Similarly, if someone wants emotional support services after reporting, they can be immediately transferred to the on-call operator for support services. Furthermore, keeping these two options separate will help streamline calling and prevent the line from clogging up. For instance, with reporting, someone may need immediate assistance with relocating or require a SANE exam, whereas with emotional support services, they may not need such urgent assistance.

I think that could be one line, because I don't know if everybody who is reporting even knows that there's emotional support services available, so being able to kind of streamline that process to be like "hey, since we're already talking, here's what we can do." Or if they're looking specifically for emotional support. —Victim service provider

**Specialization.** The best person or entity to receive a report of sexual abuse is not the same as the best person or entity to deliver emotional support services. These are different skill sets. Creating one service line for both options would necessitate two different live operator recipients: one for receiving reports and one for delivering emotional support services. Furthermore, this would not put people or entities in the uncomfortable position of filling both roles or potentially breaking confidentiality to report. People who receive reports would have a straight communication line with the facility, while protecting incarcerated people's anonymity as required by PREA Standard 115.51/115.351; people who deliver emotional support services would be able to maintain confidentiality, as required by PREA Standard 115.53/115.353.

I think it needs to be two separate ones. The skill set of somebody that's going to be offering counseling is different than what you need for somebody just taking reports. And so, I think that that needs to be distinctive and have those division between the two. And if we're not going to be able to have two, or that doesn't come to fruition, then...I think that the focus needs to be on the counseling side. —PREA auditor

**Minimized pressure.** Incarcerated survivors may feel pressure to report sexual abuse in order to receive emotional support services. Having both options available via one line gives incarcerated survivors the option to pursue both but allows them to not report. Separating the options helps to decouple emotional support services from reporting so services are not just a follow-up to reporting but can be accessed independently of reporting.



## Component 2. Non-Law Enforcement Recipient of Reports

Based on what we learned from conversations with key stakeholders, **we recommend that the entity selected to receive reports of sexual abuse be a non-law enforcement entity.** Incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse are often inherently distrustful or skeptical of law enforcement because of their previous interactions with the criminal legal system. In addition, it is not uncommon for correctional officers to have committed sexual abuse that incarcerated people report. As a result, it is understandable that survivors may be hesitant to report sexual abuse directly to law enforcement. We therefore recommend selecting non-law enforcement entities to do initial intake of reports. Entities that would likely be equipped to do so because they already collaborate with law enforcement and have investigative authority include the following:

- state offices of victim and survivor services
- state ombudsmen's offices
- state departments of health and human services
- the US Office of Inspector General<sup>17</sup>

The vast majority of stakeholders reported that the report recipient should not be law enforcement, but rather someone at an organization with experience working with incarcerated survivors, ideally one where the staff are already trauma informed, such as a department of health and human services. Stakeholders shared that the incarcerated population distrusts law enforcement and may not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with them.

In an ideal world, you would hope that you could report it to a police officer. You would hope that you could report it to those that are [there to] protect [you]. I was told after the situation, after I was arrested, after all that that they weren't used to those situations, that they weren't qualified in those areas, that they weren't trained for those kinds of situations. So how are you going to have police, how are you going to have these people there to protect and serve but not qualified in those situations? I don't understand, it doesn't make no sense to me. Where are you there to protect and serve them or you know, how are you, regardless of who you think I am or what background I come from, how are you to blame me for the situation I was just put in? I don't [understand]...I don't know who do I go to? Like who do I report that to and to know that I'm going to be, that I know there's something is going to be done that I'm going to get the help or I'm going to get the justice that I need for myself?

—Incarcerated person

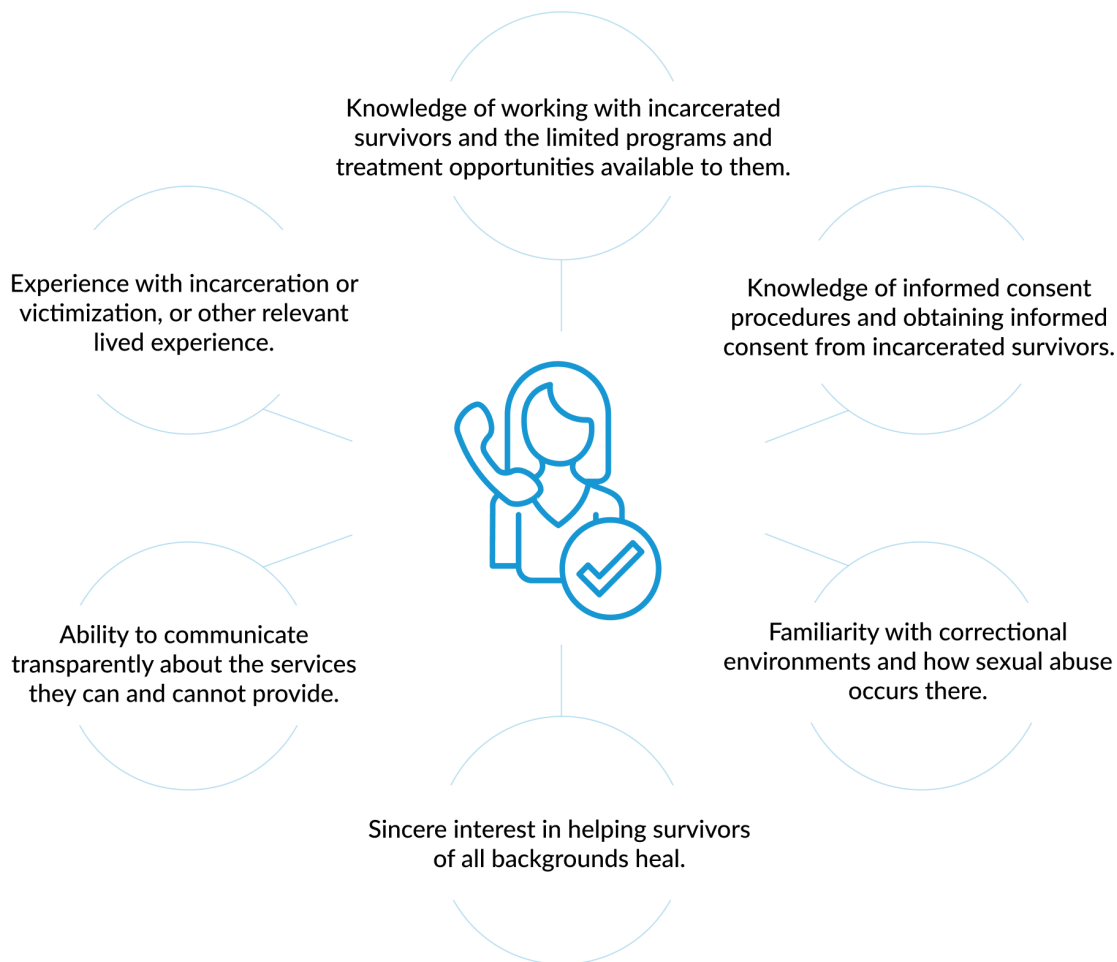




### Component 3. Providers Specialized in Delivering Trauma-informed Emotional Support Services to Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Based on what we learned from conversations with key stakeholders, we recommend that the victim service providers or other specialized providers selected to deliver emotional support services be trauma informed and have the characteristics shown in figure 2. Importantly, they should specialize in delivering emotional support services to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse and have a strong working knowledge of PREA.

**FIGURE 2**  
Necessary Qualities of a Service Line Operator Delivering Emotional Support Services to Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse



Source: Urban Institute.



## Component 4. Multiple Ways to Use the Service Line

We recommend that facilities offer incarcerated people multiple ways to reach the service line, including via phone, tablet, text message, and/or email/kiosk message, and that they make it available on all their communication devices. Incarcerated survivors can feel highly stigmatized, embarrassed, and afraid when reporting sexual abuse and seeking emotional support services. Providing multiple options allows them to choose whichever one feels most comfortable to them.

Most stakeholders we spoke with agreed that giving incarcerated people multiple ways to report and access emotional support services would increase their sense of safety and comfort. Reporting options that do not require verbal communication, such as using tablets or text messaging, could be especially beneficial, as they allow people not to verbally disclose information in settings where other incarcerated people and staff could hear them. This option seemed to resonate with incarcerated people.

I was just thinking about the most private is if they call on their tablet and their roommates happen to be out of the room, that would be their most private situation here. We usually have them either between three and...but there's eight in the bay. If they're roommates, were out of the room, that would be their most private situation. —Corrections leader or staff member



## Component 5. Privacy and Confidentiality to the Extent Possible in All Ways of Using the Service Line

People's movements and phone calls are monitored in correctional facilities, which makes providing confidentiality and privacy a challenge. Given the structure of correctional facilities, **we recommend that multiple measures be put in place to ensure the highest level of privacy and confidentiality possible for incarcerated people using the service line.** Those measures are as follows:

- **The service line should be accessible on every phone in a facility.** Incarcerated people will have different levels of comfort using a phone to report in certain areas of a facility. For this reason, we recommend that the service line be made available on all phones so that someone can choose where they would like to make a report or receive emotional support services.
- **Facilities should work with their phone providers to prohibit audio recording of phone calls made to the service line.** We learned from facilities that have been able to make this accommodation that it increases perceptions of safety and confidentiality for incarcerated survivors.

- **Incarcerated people should not be required to enter their PIN number when calling the service line from a phone or tablet, or a universal pin (like “0000”) should be made available.** We learned that some facilities have been able to disable the need to enter a PIN number when calling certain phone numbers, like reporting lines. This is essential to ensure anonymity for incarcerated survivors.



## **Component 6. Accessibility for Overlooked Populations**

Most incarcerated people face significant barriers to reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services. These barriers increase for the most overlooked populations behind bars, including people who are deaf or hard of hearing, are blind or have low vision, have a disability, or have limited English proficiency. Accessibility for all incarcerated populations, including the most vulnerable, is essential to the success of the service line, and for that reason, **we recommend that the service line include interpretation services to ensure accessibility.**

Importantly, interpretation services must go beyond the most common languages and include less common ones, such as Haitian Creole, Arabic, and Burmese. Furthermore, to protect incarcerated survivors' privacy and identities, interpretation services must have agreements in place to uphold confidentiality and not audio-record calls. Interpreters should be trained in understanding sexual abuse in correctional settings and providing trauma-informed services. Options for reporting sexual abuse and accessing emotional support services are currently limited for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, are blind or have limited vision, have a disability, or have limited English proficiency.



## **Component 7. Training for System Stakeholders**

Based on what we learned from conversations with key stakeholders, **we recommend developing and delivering comprehensive initial and annual training to system stakeholders, including all staff and volunteers (security and nonsecurity) at correctional facilities, entities operating the service line, and victim service providers and advocacy organizations.** Training is essential to ensure that the service line functions as intended, and that key stakeholders can share accurate information with incarcerated people. We recommend that one national organization deliver training on reporting sexual abuse and another national organization deliver training on emotional support services. This training can also be adapted into a train-the-trainer model to make it more feasible. Table 9 shows possible training topics by stakeholder group.

TABLE 9

Possible Training Topics on Implementing and Maintaining a Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors, by Stakeholder Group

	Stakeholder group receiving training		
	Facility staff and volunteers (security and nonsecurity)	Service line operators	Victim service providers and advocacy organizations
<b>Training purpose</b>	Build knowledge about the service line and ensure staff understand operations so they can provide access to incarcerated survivors.	Prepare service line operators to either receive reports or deliver emotional support services to incarcerated survivors.	Raise awareness about the service line so providers and organizations can share information with incarcerated survivors and their loved ones.
<b>Training topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ overview of service line</li> <li>■ dynamics of sexual abuse behind bars</li> <li>■ overview of PREA Standards 115.51 and 115.53</li> <li>■ rights of incarcerated people</li> <li>■ ensuring anonymity and confidentiality</li> <li>■ service line operations</li> <li>■ trauma-informed approaches</li> <li>■ accessibility considerations for overlooked populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ overview of service line</li> <li>■ dynamics of sexual abuse behind bars</li> <li>■ overview of PREA Standards 115.51 and 115.53</li> <li>■ rights of incarcerated people</li> <li>■ procedures for receiving reports</li> <li>■ ensuring anonymity and confidentiality</li> <li>■ delivering emotional support services</li> <li>■ trauma-informed approaches</li> <li>■ accessibility considerations for overlooked populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ overview of service line</li> <li>■ overview of PREA Standards 115.51 and 115.53</li> <li>■ rights of incarcerated people</li> <li>■ how to use the service line</li> <li>■ conducting follow-up with incarcerated people</li> <li>■ accessibility considerations for overlooked populations</li> </ul>
<b>Frequency</b>	Initial training, and annual PREA training	Initial training and annual training for service line operators	Quarterly

Source: Urban Institute.

Notes: PREA = Prison Rape Elimination Act.



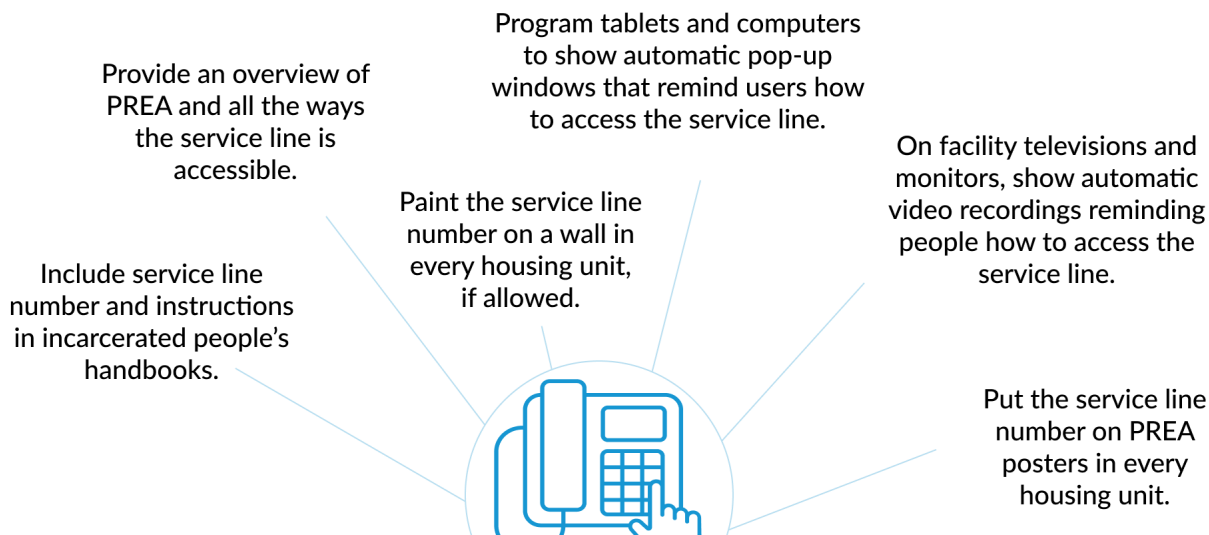
## Component 8. Comprehensive and Frequent Education for Incarcerated People

Incarcerated people have limited awareness of their options for reporting sexual abuse and receiving emotional support services. Though the service line is intended to expand those options, its effects will be limited if implementation is not coupled with education and awareness-building efforts. **We recommend developing and delivering comprehensive, frequent education and awareness-building efforts for incarcerated people.** We believe there is little risk of overcommunicating about the options available to incarcerated people, and therefore recommend that a multipronged approach be

implemented (figure 3). We also recommend that incarcerated peer mentors or peer support specialists help deliver education to incarcerated people.

FIGURE 3

### A Multipronged Approach to Educating Incarcerated People about a Service Line for Reporting Sexual Abuse and Accessing Emotional Support Services



Source: Urban Institute.

Note: PREA = Prison Rape Elimination Act.



## Component 9. Routine Maintenance

As with any newly implemented technology, routine maintenance is important. **We recommend conducting routine maintenance on the service line to ensure it is functioning and accessible to incarcerated people. This would be in addition to the checks of the line that would occur during PREA audits.**



## Component 10. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis can take many formats. For instance, a facility point-person could be responsible for calling the service line each month and ensuring both the operator for receiving reports and the operator providing emotional support services are answering. The phone number could also be tested once a month on every phone in a facility to ensure there are not phone outages in certain housing units.

Stakeholders shared concerns about incarcerated people misusing current service lines and making false PREA reports, and about whether one service line could accommodate all of the calls made to it. For this reason, **we recommend that the entities operating the line collect data on service line usage to track patterns in use and demand.** This will better inform decisions about the service line’s operations and implementation. We suggest collecting the following data *monthly*, broken down by facility type (jail, youth facility, state or federal prison):

- number of calls made to report sexual abuse
- number of calls made to access emotional support services
- percentage of calls made for reporting that were not relevant (for example, outside the scope of the service line or not related to sexual abuse)
- percentage of calls made for emotional support services that were not relevant
- types of services provided (for instance, what percentage of people received immediate crisis counseling)
- average call length
- location of call (by *name of facility*, type of facility, security level)
- caller demographics (*gender, race/ethnicity*)

*(In the above list, italicized data points are those that will need to be volunteered by incarcerated people calling the service line.)*<sup>18</sup>

## Four Potential Models for Implementing the Service Line

We envision the service line being structured in one of the four ways described below. There are benefits and disadvantages to each model and we lay these out in our recommendations. The models are listed in no particular order and do not reflect a preference for a particular model. Regardless of which model is used, the service line must have the [10 core components outlined above](#).

MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3	MODEL 4
State Reporting and State Emotional Support Services	National Reporting and National Emotional Support Services	National Reporting and State Emotional Support Services	State Reporting and National Emotional Support Services

## Model 1. State Reporting and State Emotional Support Services

Model 1 (see figure 4 below) involves a state-run reporting recipient and a state-run emotional support services live operator recipient. When a person dials "911" from anywhere in the United States, the call goes to local dispatch. One could similarly imagine this service line being structured with a standardized number available in all correctional agencies that connects to a voice-recorded answering machine that prompts the caller to dial 1 for reporting or 2 for emotional support services. Once the caller selects their desired pathway, their call will be routed to their state reporting entity or their state emotional support services entity.

State reporting entities can be non-law enforcement entities that have investigative authority and can work with law enforcement, similar to the model used in the juvenile justice system, which most often has statewide agencies receive reports of sexual abuse. Examples of these reporting entities include state offices of victim and survivor services, state ombudsmen's offices, and state departments of health and human services. Reporting entities will need to have knowledge of the correctional facilities in their states and state laws around reporting sexual abuse and required follow-up investigation.

A state's emotional support services entities can be victim service providers already operating in that state. For example, the state's sexual assault coalition might already provide services to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse in select locations, and with funding to operate the service line, it could expand its reach statewide. These entities will need to have knowledge of the correctional facilities in their states.

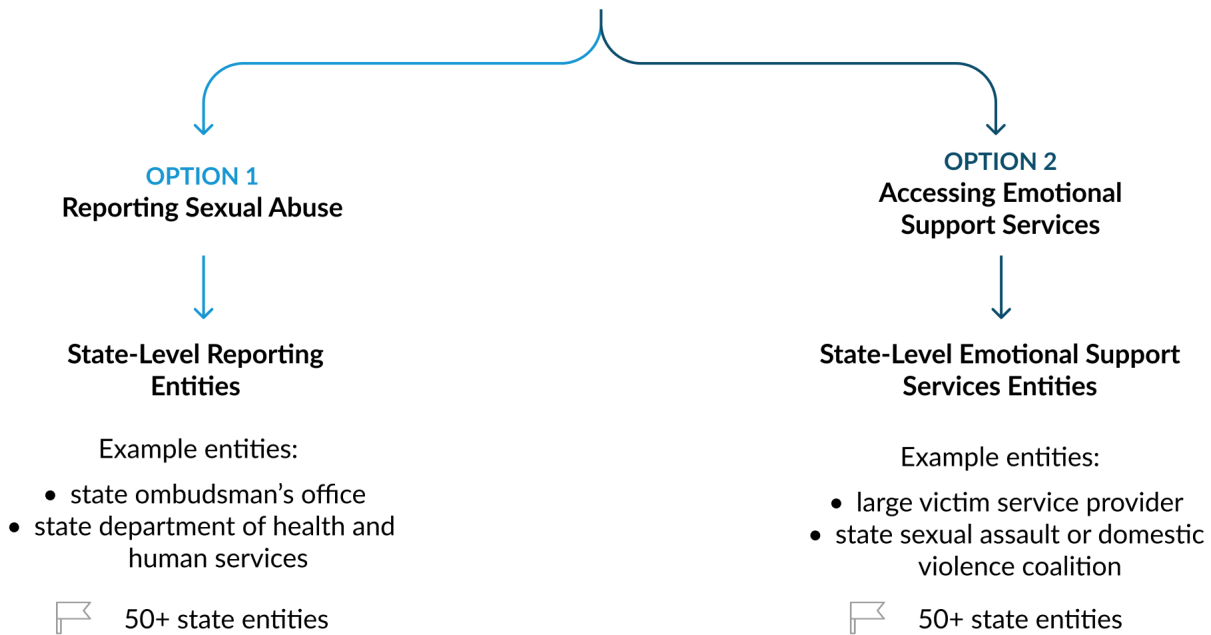
For this structure to operate across the country, the service line would need the following:

- one national organization/agency to organize all reporting and emotional support services entities and provide oversight of the service line
- state-level reporting entities for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- emotional support services entities for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- one or multiple funding streams
- one evaluator/research partner

FIGURE 4

Model 1: State Reporting and State Emotional Support Services

Voice-Recorded Answering Machine Prompts Dialer to Select 1 or 2



Source: Urban Institute.

Model 2. National Reporting and National Emotional Support Services

Model 2 (see figure 5 below) supports a nationally run reporting line and nationally run emotional support services. The caller would be greeted by a national operator in the form of a voice-recorded answering machine that prompts them to dial 1 for reporting or 2 for emotional support services. Once the caller selects their desired pathway, their call will be routed to the national reporting entity or the national emotional support services entity. These entities will be independent; one entity cannot both receive reports and deliver emotional support services.

The national reporting entity can be a non-law enforcement entity that has investigative authority and can work with law enforcement. Examples include the US Office of Inspector General and the US Government Accountability Office.

The emotional support services entity can be a national victim service provider with capacity to operate and provide services in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories. It will need to have basic knowledge of the thousands of correctional facilities across the United States.



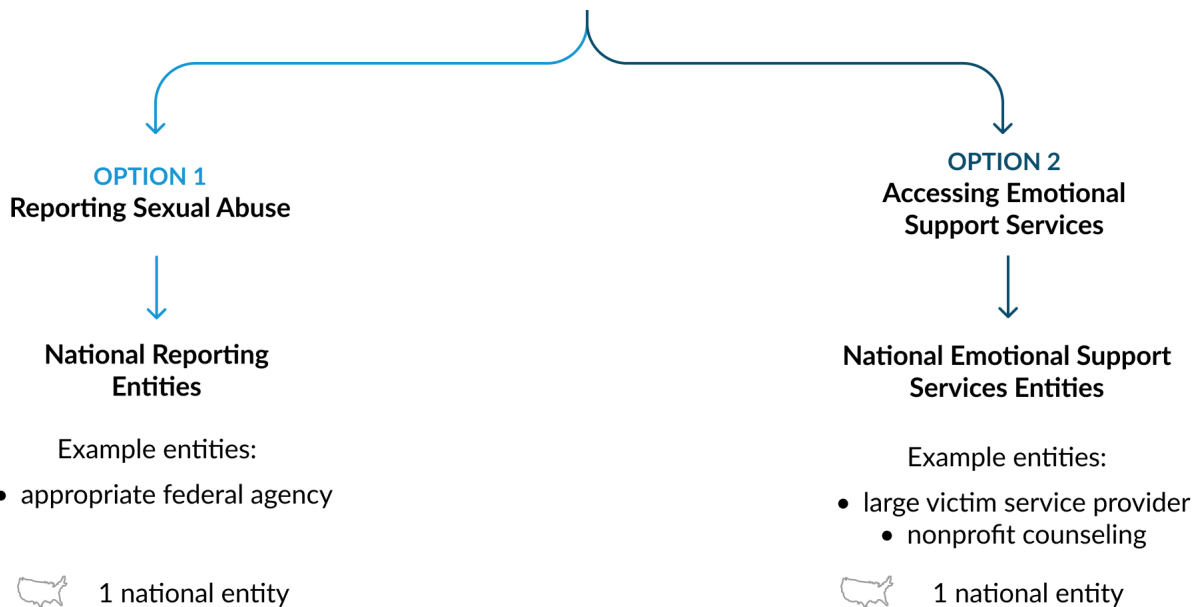
For this structure to operate across the country, the service line would need the following:

- one national organization/agency to provide oversight of the service line
- one national-level reporting entity to cover all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- one national-level emotional support services entity to cover all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- one or multiple funding streams
- one evaluator/research partner

FIGURE 5

Model 2: National Reporting and National Emotional Support Services

Voice-Recorded Answering Machine Prompts Dialer to Select 1 or 2



Source: Urban Institute.

Model 3. National Reporting and State Emotional Support Services

Model 3 (see figure 6 below) supports a nationally run reporting line and state-run emotional support services. This model would involve a blended approach that we have not seen elsewhere. The caller would be greeted by a national operator in the form of a voice-recorded answering machine that

prompts them to dial 1 for reporting or 2 for emotional support services. Once the caller selects their desired pathway, their call will be routed to the national reporting entity or their state emotional support services entity.

The national reporting entity can be a non-law enforcement entity that has investigative authority and can work with law enforcement. Examples include the US Office of Inspector General and the US Government Accountability Office.

A state's emotional support services entities can be victim service providers already operating in that state. For example, the state's sexual assault coalition might already provide services to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse in select locations, and with funding to operate the service line, it could expand its reach statewide. These entities will need to have knowledge of the correctional facilities in their states.

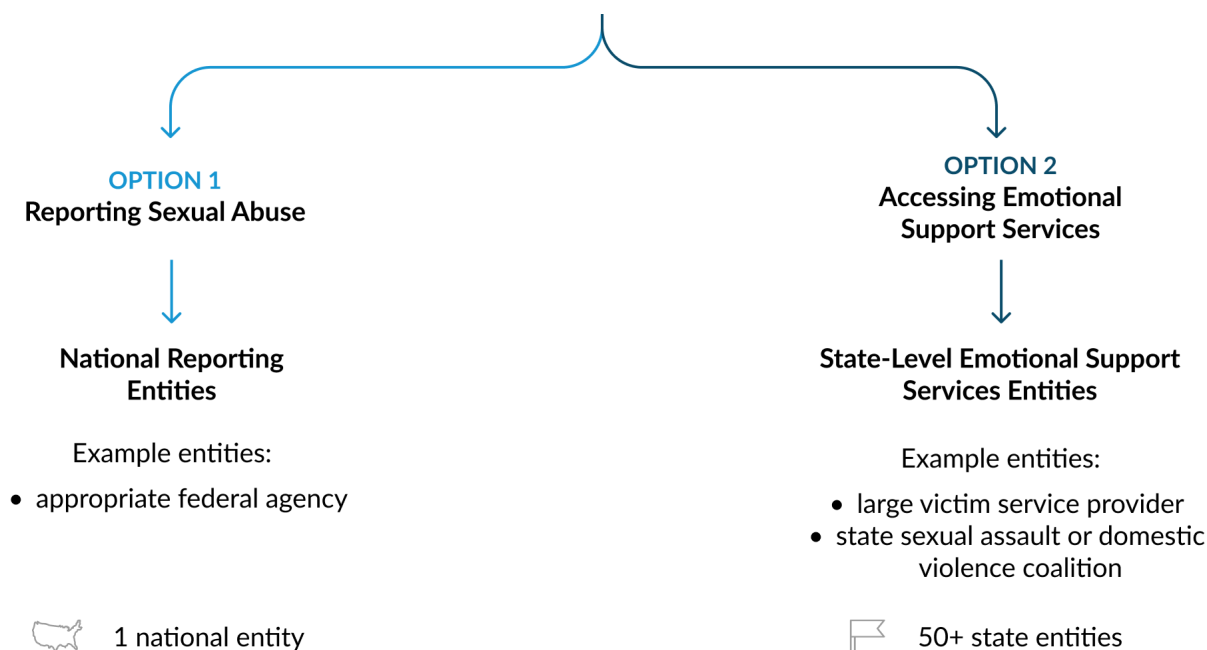
For this structure to operate across the country, the service line would need the following:

- one national organization/agency to provide oversight of the service line
- one national-level reporting entity to cover all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- emotional support services entities for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- one or multiple funding streams
- one evaluator/research partner

FIGURE 6

Model 3: National Reporting and State Emotional Support Services

Voice-Recorded Answering Machine Prompts Dialer to Select 1 or 2



Source: Urban Institute.

**Model 4. State Reporting and National Emotional Support Services**

Model 4 (see figure 7 below) supports a state-run reporting line and nationally run emotional support services. This would involve a blended approach that we have not seen elsewhere. The caller would be greeted by a national operator in the form of a voice-recorded answering machine that prompts them to dial 1 for reporting or 2 for emotional support services. Once the caller selects their desired pathway, their call will be routed to their state reporting entity or the national emotional support services entity.

The state reporting entities can be non-law enforcement entities that have investigative authority and can work with law enforcement, similar to the model used in the juvenile justice system, which most often has statewide agencies receive reports of sexual abuse. Examples include state offices of victim and survivor services, state ombudsmen’s offices, and state departments of health and human services. They will need to have knowledge of the correctional facilities in their states and state laws around reporting sexual abuse and required follow-up investigation.

The emotional support services entity can be a national victim service provider with capacity to operate and provide services in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories. It will need to have basic knowledge of the thousands of correctional facilities across the United States.

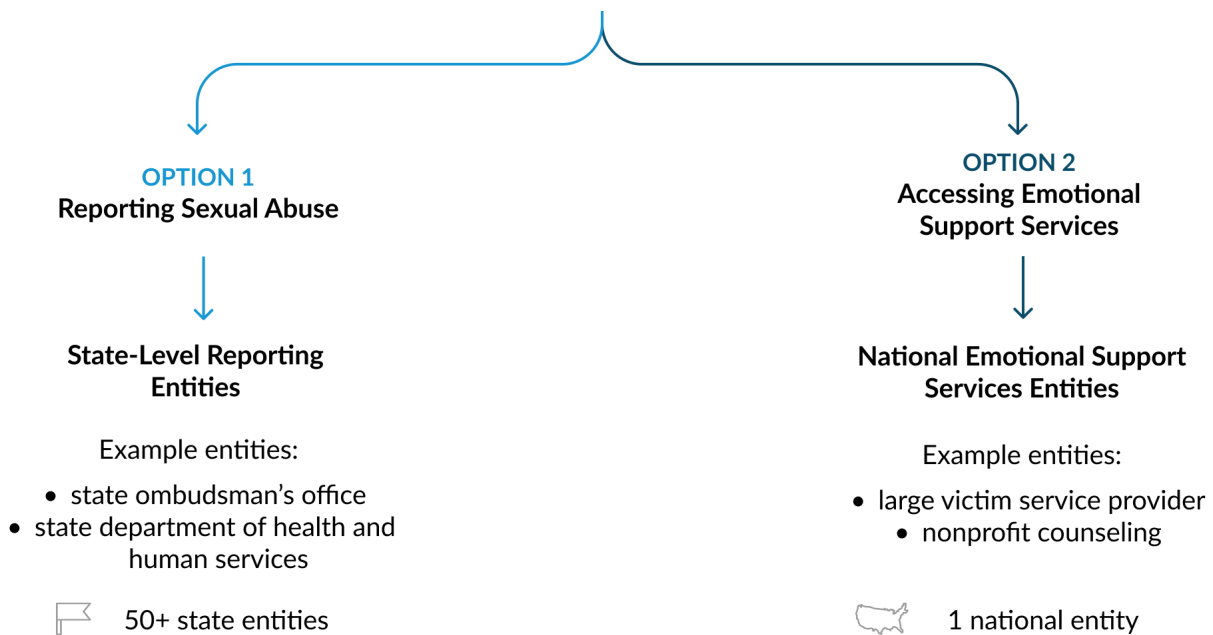
For this structure to operate across the country, the service line would need the following:

- one national organization/agency to provide oversight of the service line
- state-level reporting entities for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- one national emotional support services entity to cover all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories
- one or multiple funding streams
- one evaluator/research partner

FIGURE 7

Model 4: State Reporting and National Emotional Support Services

**Voice-Recorded Answering Machine Prompts Dialer to Select 1 or 2**



Source: Urban Institute.

## Comparing the Four Potential Models for Implementation

Table 10 outlines the advantages and disadvantages of each of the four potential models for implementing a service line for incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse.

**TABLE 10**  
**Comparing Four Potential Models for Implementing a Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Advantages and Disadvantages**

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Model 1: State reporting and state emotional support services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ entities familiar with state reporting and investigative processes</li> <li>▪ entities familiar with state and local victim service providers</li> <li>▪ responsibility and volume of calls involved in operating the service line distributed across states rather than across only two entities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ variation in reporting practices and/or which entities receive calls by state</li> <li>▪ potential challenges in monitoring the line and providing education about reporting because of variation</li> <li>▪ variation in emotional support services available</li> <li>▪ requires coordination across 100+ different entities</li> </ul>
<b>Model 2: National reporting and national emotional support services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ standard reporting option across the US</li> <li>▪ standard services option across the US</li> <li>▪ maximized consistency for incarcerated people regardless of where they are held in custody</li> <li>▪ requires coordination between only two entities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ less familiarity with state reporting and investigative processes</li> <li>▪ less familiarity with state and local victim service providers</li> <li>▪ requires significant capacity to serve all facilities across the US</li> </ul>
<b>Model 3: National reporting and state emotional support services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ standard reporting option across the US</li> <li>▪ state service entities familiar with state and local victim service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ less familiarity with state reporting and investigative processes</li> <li>▪ variation in emotional support services available</li> <li>▪ requires coordination across 50+ emotional support services entities</li> </ul>
<b>Model 4: State reporting and national emotional support services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ reporting entities familiar with state reporting and investigative processes</li> <li>▪ standard services option across the US</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ less familiarity with state and local victim service providers</li> <li>▪ variation in reporting practices and/or which entities receive calls by state</li> <li>▪ requires coordination between 50+ reporting entities</li> </ul>

Source: Urban Institute.

# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> “PREA Standards: § 115.51 Inmate, detainee, and resident reporting,” PREA Resource Center, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/standard/115-51>.
- <sup>2</sup> “PREA Standards: § 115.53 Inmate, detainee, and resident access to outside confidential support services,” PREA Resource Center, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/standard/115-53>.
- <sup>3</sup> See the Bureau of Justice Assistance’s state PREA submissions site: “State PREA Submissions,” Bureau of Justice Assistance, accessed May 14, 2024, <https://data.ojp.usdoj.gov/stories/s/e58i-ae hm>.
- <sup>4</sup> These statistics are the most recent available numbers from the NIS. The most recent iteration (NIS-4) is being undertaken in 2023 and results are not yet available. The latest iteration was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- <sup>5</sup> These include “inmate-on-inmate nonconsensual sex acts, inmate-on-inmate abusive sexual misconduct, and staff-on-inmate sexual harassment” (Maruschak and Buehler 2021).
- <sup>6</sup> An increase in reporting does not necessarily mean an increase in abuse and violence. A change could instead reflect that people’s willingness to report abuse changed while the amount of violence occurring remained the same (or even possibly decreased). Without research to disentangle this effect, we do not know whether increases in rates over time reflect increases in reporting behavior (willingness) or increases in violence.
- <sup>7</sup> National Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape, 28 CFR 114 (2012).
- <sup>8</sup> For the final national PREA standards on prisons and jails, see <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/PREA-Prison-Jail-Standards.pdf>. For the final national PREA standards on lockups, see <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/PREA-Lockup-Standards.pdf>. For the final national PREA standards on community confinement, see <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/PREA-Community-Confinement-Standards.pdf>. For the final national PREA standards on juvenile facilities, see <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/PREA-Juvenile-Facility-Standards.pdf>.
- <sup>9</sup> See the Bureau of Justice Assistance’s state PREA submissions site: “State PREA Submissions,” Bureau of Justice Assistance, accessed May 14, 2024, <https://data.ojp.usdoj.gov/stories/s/e58i-ae hm>.
- <sup>10</sup> “FY 2020 List of Certification and Assurance Submissions for Audit Year 3 of Cycle 2,” Bureau of Justice Assistance, last updated January 5, 2023, <https://bja.ojp.gov/doc/fy20-prea-certification-assurance-submissions.pdf>.
- <sup>11</sup> We received only one response from a victim service provider in the West and intentionally did not invite them because of potential identifiability.
- <sup>12</sup> A rape crisis center “refers to an entity that provides intervention and related assistance, such as the services specified in 42 U.S.C. 14043 g(b)(2)(C), to victims of sexual assault of all ages.” From *The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): What it Means for Your Advocacy Work* (Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Coalition against Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2013, 7).
- <sup>13</sup> It is unclear whether the national organization mentioned by this service provider operates a line specifically for incarcerated survivors. Because of this uncertainty, we have omitted that national organization’s name from this finding.
- <sup>14</sup> A SANE exam is a medical and forensic examination of someone who has experienced sexual assault. It includes a physical and genital exam for injury and collection of swabs and samples for evidence.

- <sup>15</sup> We use the lowercase “deaf” in this report to refer to people who have a physical condition that limits their hearing, rather than the uppercase “Deaf,” which refers to people who identify with the cultural community in which American Sign Language is the primary language. Because incarcerated people may not come from this community and our perspectives and recommendations include all people with physical hearing impairments, we do not capitalize the “d” in deaf.
- <sup>16</sup> See Ella Fassler, “Prison Phone companies Are Recording Attorney-Client Calls across the US,” Vice, December 13, 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/7kbbey/prison-phone-companies-are-recording-attorney-client-calls-across-the-us>, and Chris Francesceni, “US Prisons and Jails Using AI to Mass-Monitor Millions of Inmate Calls,” ABC News, October 24, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/us-prisons-jails-ai-mass-monitor-millions-inmate/story?id=66370244/>.
- <sup>17</sup> Though the Office of Inspector General is a law enforcement agency, it is not thought of as standard law enforcement such as police departments or sheriff’s offices. OIG currently receives reports from incarcerated people under Bureau of Prison (BOP) custody.
- <sup>18</sup> Information that could compromise a survivor’s anonymity or confidentiality should be volunteered by the survivor and not requested by the operator. This arrangement may lead to missing data, as some information may not naturally come up during a call, which is okay.

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