

**BUREAU OF PRISONS —
INMATE INFORMATION**

Family Plan
Checklist

- Find Inmate
- Visiting
- Phone & Email
- Send Money
- Stay Organized






Inmate Locator

Search by Name or Inmate Number

Loved One in Federal Prison

A Family Survival Guide — 2026 Edition

WHAT'S INSIDE

-  Find them with the BOP Inmate Locator
-  Get on the visiting list
-  Set up phone & email contact
-  Send money the right way
-  Avoid the 5 costly mistakes

Loved One in Federal Prison: A Family Survival Guide — 2026

If someone you love just entered the federal prison system, this guide walks you through exactly how to find them, stay in contact, visit, and send money — plus the common mistakes that quietly cut families off. It covers the **federal** system only (the Bureau of Prisons). State and county systems work differently.

Two Things You'll Always Need


Their **full committed name** and **eight-digit register number** — required for almost everything.

Find Anyone in Federal Custody

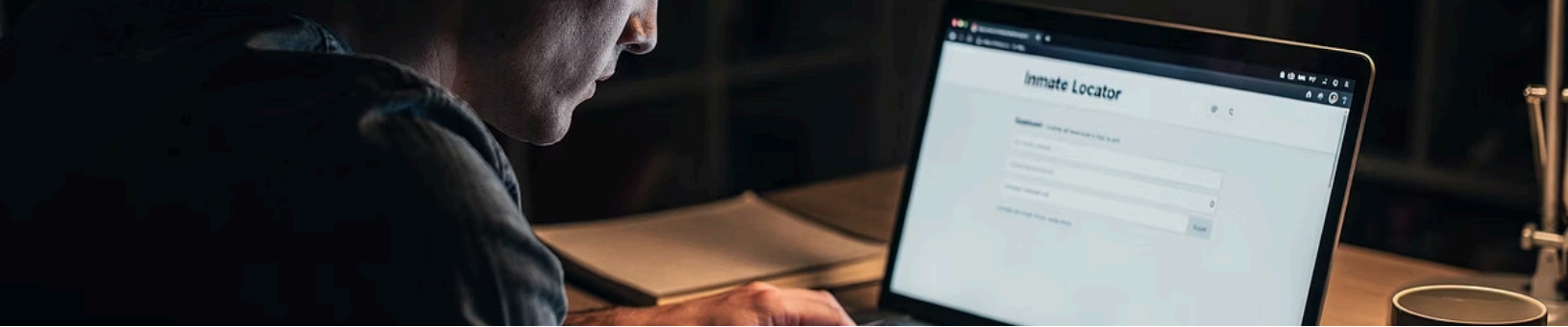
Free inmate search (1982–present) at [bop.gov/inmateloc](https://www.bop.gov/inmateloc).

Four Separate Systems

Phone, email, visiting, and money each require their own setup step before you can use them.

 Rates, codes, and rules change. Always confirm current phone rates, money-transfer codes, and visiting procedures on [bop.gov](https://www.bop.gov) before you act.





Step 1: Find Them — The BOP Inmate Locator

The federal system is run by the **Bureau of Prisons (BOP)**. Your first move is to locate your loved one and get their register number.

- ⓘ Heads up: release dates can be out of date because of ongoing First Step Act sentence recalculations. Recheck periodically rather than relying on a single lookup.

How to Search

1. Go to bop.gov/inmateloc
2. Search by **name** or by **number** (BOP Register Number, FBI Number, INS/DCDC Number)
3. The result shows their **current facility** and **register number**

For records **before 1982**, request a manual search through the **National Archives (NARA)** at [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov) — you'll need the inmate's full legal name, date of birth, race, and approximate dates of confinement.

Reading the Results

| What You See | What It Means |
|-------------------------|---|
| A specific release date | Projected release (may reflect good-conduct time) |
| "UNKNOWN" release date | Sentence not yet finalized — common for pretrial detainees |
| A facility name | Where they're physically held right now |
| "IN TRANSIT" | Being moved between facilities — often in temporary U.S. Marshals custody |
| "CCM" | In a halfway house / community corrections, not a secure prison |
| "RELEASED" | No longer in BOP custody (may still be on supervised release) |

Step 2: The Register Number and Committed Name

These two details are the keys to the entire system. Get them right and write them down.

Register Number

An **eight-digit** number assigned to your loved one. It **generally stays the same**, even if they transfer facilities. You'll use it on every letter, deposit, phone list, and email request.

Committed Name

The full legal name they were committed under. Always use this **exact name** – not a nickname or shortened version – on mail and money deposits.

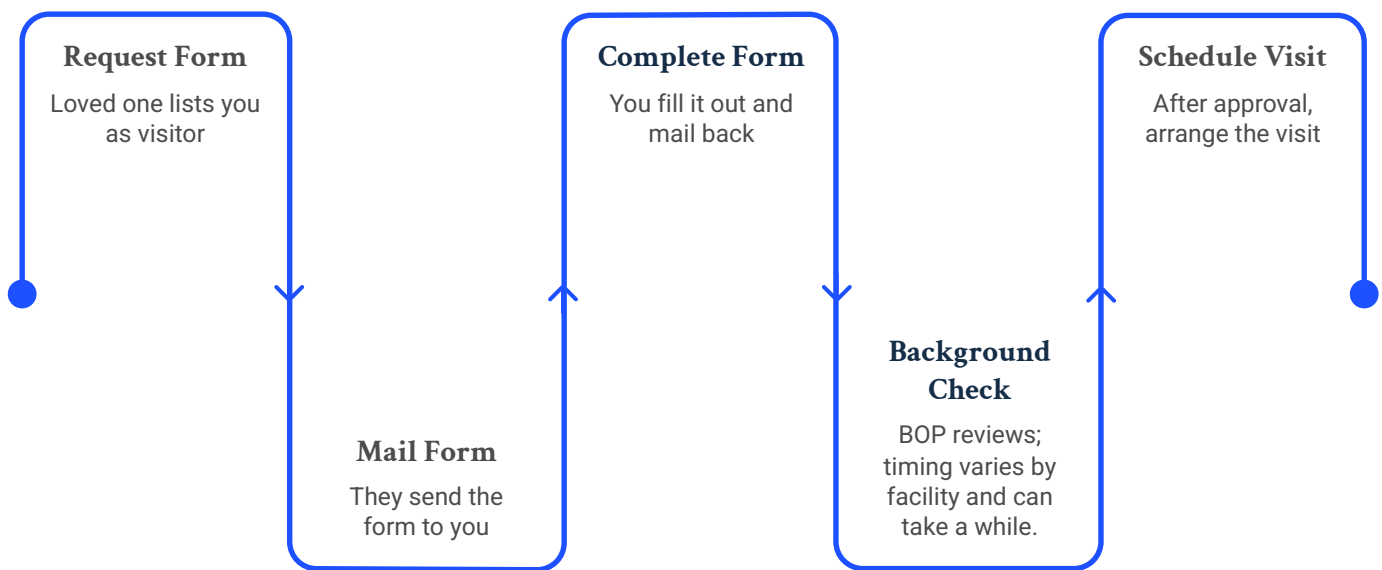
- ⊗ **Why it matters:** Mail or money sent without the correct committed name **and** complete register number can be delayed, returned, or never delivered.





Step 3: Get on the Visiting List

You cannot simply show up. Visiting is approval-only, and **your loved one starts the process – not you.**



This process takes time – start it the moment you can. Showing up before you're approved means being turned away at the door.

Before Your First Visit, Check the Facility Page For:

- Visiting days and hours (they vary by institution)
- Dress code (many facilities have strict rules)
- What you can bring in (usually very limited – often only a clear ID holder and coins for vending)
- Whether visits are walk-in or must be scheduled in advance

Visiting List Limits

- **Immediate family** named in the Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) may visit during the **first 30 days** while background check is pending
- Facilities usually allow about **20–25 total approved visitors**, with friends and associates capped around **10**
- Inmates can typically update the list only **once every 30 to 90 days**, depending on the facility



Step 4: Phone Calls — How TRUFONE Works

Federal inmates use a monitored phone system called **TRUFONE**. A few things surprise families.



They Call You

You can't call in. Your number must be on their approved contact list first. Calls are **recorded and monitored** (except properly arranged legal calls).



15-Minute Limit

Calls cut off at **15 minutes**, with a short waiting period before the next call. Monthly limit is generally **300 minutes**, sometimes a bit more around the holidays.



Cost & FCC Caps

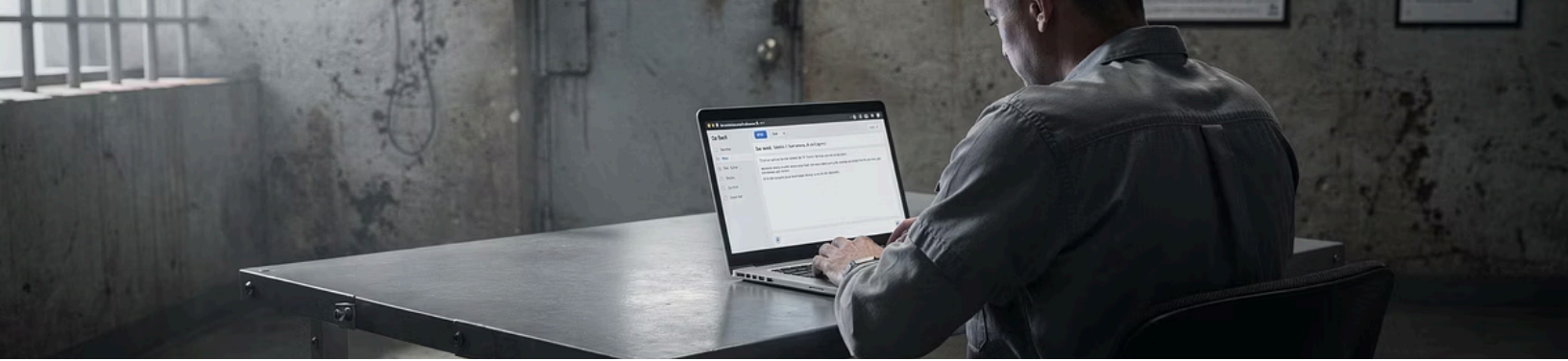
Phone pricing is in flux — the FCC's lower prison-call rate caps have been delayed (currently until 2027), so what you actually pay depends on the facility's provider. Always check the current rate before adding money.



First Step Act Minutes

Inmates who participate in (or are waitlisted for) eligible First Step Act programs may receive free monthly phone minutes as an incentive. The exact allowance varies — confirm it with the facility.

⚠ Blocked numbers: TRUFONE blocks call-forwarding and many internet-based numbers — including **Google Voice** — for security. Use a standard landline or cell number on the approved list.



Step 5: Email — TRULINCS and CorrLinks

The BOP's email system is **TRULINCS**. On the outside, you use a free account at **CorrLinks** (corrlinks.com).

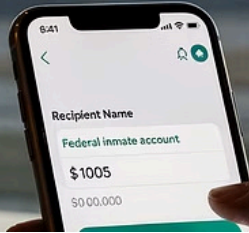
How It Works

1. Your loved one adds you as a contact
2. You receive an invitation from CorrLinks with a code valid for **10 days** — accept it before it expires
3. Messages are **screened by staff**, causing them to be held at least an hour (sometimes longer).
4. The inmate pays roughly **\$0.05 per minute** of terminal time (reading and writing)

Limits to Know

- **Text only** — no attachments, no photos, no formatting. Sending an attachment can strip or corrupt your message.
- Messages are capped at about **13,000 characters** (\approx two pages)
- Inmates can keep up to about **around 30 active email contacts (phone numbers are managed on a separate list)**.
- There is **no monthly message cap** like the phone has
- **Not a legal channel.** Even if an attorney is added as a contact, CorrLinks messages are monitored and are **NOT** treated as privileged. Use properly marked legal mail or an approved legal call for anything confidential.

⊗ Nothing here is private — write accordingly.



Step 6: Sending Money — The Right Way

Money goes onto your loved one's **commissary (trust) account**, which they use for phone time, email time, food, and basics. Wait until your loved one has **physically arrived and been registered** at a BOP facility before sending — funds can't post before then.

 Always confirm the current codes on bop.gov/inmates/communications.jsp before sending.

| Method | How | Speed |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Western Union | Online, app, or agent. Use city code FBOP, DC . Account number = register number + last name, no spaces (e.g., 12345678DOE). Phone: 1-800-634-3422 | Posts in 2–4 hours (7am–9pm ET) |
| MoneyGram | ExpressPayment online or at an agent. Receive code 7932 , "Federal Bureau of Prisons," Washington DC. Same account-number format. | Posts in 2–4 hours (7am–9pm ET) |
| Mail (National Lockbox) | U.S. Postal money order, cashier's check, or government check only | Slower; 15-day hold on non-postal money orders |


National Lockbox Mailing Address

Money only — no letters or photos

Federal Bureau of Prisons
[Inmate's Full Committed Name]
[Inmate's 8-Digit Register Number]
PO Box 474701
Des Moines, IA 50947-0001

Note on Holds

U.S. Postal money orders and government-issued checks post once processed. **Every other instrument** — non-postal money orders, Western Union/bank money orders, and personal or bank checks — is held **15 days to clear** before the funds are available.

 **Never** mail cash or a personal check to the facility — it gets rejected or delayed.



Costs at a Glance

Here's a quick overview of what to expect financially when staying connected with your loved one in federal custody.

\$0

Inmate Locator

Completely free to search at bop.gov/inmateloc

\$0

CorrLinks Account

Free to create and use on the outside

300

Phone Minutes/Month

Generally 300 min/month with a 15-min cap per call; sometimes a bit more around the holidays.

varies

Per Minute (Audio)

per-minute rate varies (FCC caps delayed to 2027 – confirm current)

\$0.05

Per Minute (Email)

TRULINCS terminal time; no monthly message cap

2-4

Hours to Post (WU/MG)

Western Union or MoneyGram deposits post within 2-4 hours (7am-9pm ET)



Common Pitfalls — and Why They Happen

These are the most frequent mistakes families make — and understanding why they happen helps you avoid them.

- 1 Assuming the Prison Will Keep You Informed**

The system is not built to update families proactively. Notifications about transfers or even hospitalizations can be delayed or missed — and they depend on whether the right person is listed as the emergency contact. **Make sure your loved one lists you, in writing, early.**
- 2 Sending Money the Wrong Way**

Cash and personal checks to the facility get rejected. Use Western Union, MoneyGram, or the National Lockbox — and only after arrival.
- 3 Leaving Information Off the Deposit or Envelope**

Every item needs the **full committed name + exact register number**. Missing either is the #1 reason mail and money don't arrive.
- 4 Discussing the Case on Phone or Email**

Everything (except properly arranged legal calls) is recorded and can be used. Keep case talk between your loved one and their attorney.
- 5 Showing Up to Visit Before Approval**

The visiting list is cleared in advance — never first-come at the door. The background check takes weeks; start the process immediately.



A Note on Serious Illness or Emergencies

On paper, the BOP has procedures to notify a designated next-of-kin when someone is seriously ill, injured, or dies in custody. In practice, families have reported learning late. This gap is well documented – in April 2025, bipartisan lawmakers introduced the **Family Notification of Death, Injury, or Illness in Custody Act** (S. 1322 / H.R. 2718) to require prompt, uniform next-of-kin notification during serious hospitalizations.

The single best protection is making sure your loved one has named you as the emergency contact at intake – and that you keep the facility's phone number handy.

What You Can Do Right Now

- Confirm your loved one has **named you (or the right family member) as the emergency contact** at intake – and update it if anything changes
- Keep the **facility's phone number** handy (find it via the Inmate Locator → facility page)
- If you can't reach anyone, the **facility's main line** is your starting point; ask for the unit team or chaplain

i S. 1322 / H.R. 2718 – the Family Notification Act – was introduced in April 2025 with bipartisan support to close this gap.

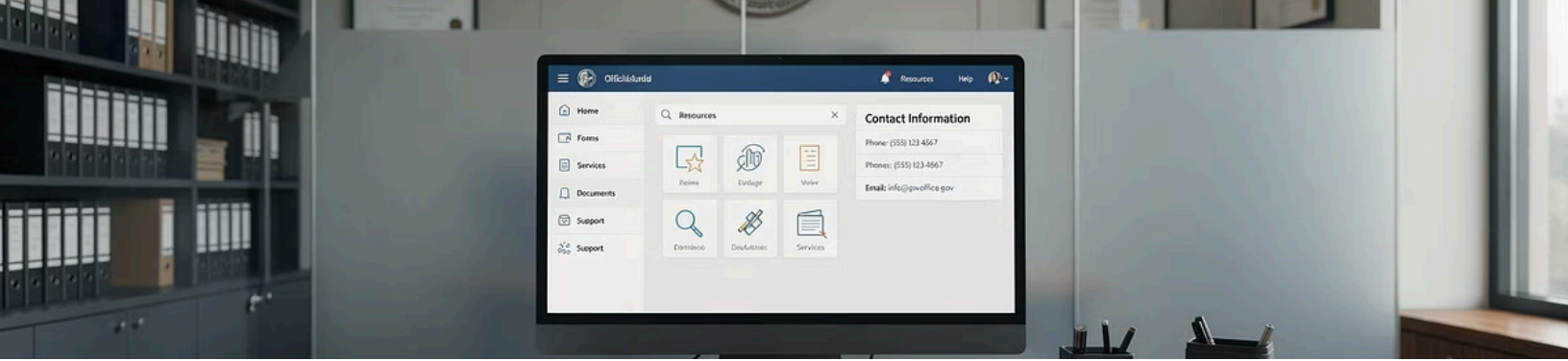


Quick-Start Checklist

Print this and work through it in order. Complete each step before moving to the next.

- Find your loved one at **bop.gov/inmateloc**
- Write down their **full committed name** and **8-digit register number**
- Confirm which **facility** holds them and save its phone number
- Ask them to **add you to the phone and email contact lists**
- Create a free **CorrLinks** account and accept the invite within 10 days
- Ask them to **request the visitor form** and mail it to you
- Return the visitor form and **wait for the background check**
- Wait until they've **arrived at the facility**, then set up money via WU/MoneyGram
- Confirm they've listed you as the **emergency contact**, in writing
- Verify current **phone rates and money codes** on bop.gov

✔ Working through this checklist in order ensures you don't miss a step that could delay communication or access.



Official Resources & Contact Information

Bookmark these official sources. Always verify current rules, rates, and codes directly with the BOP before taking action.

Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

- **Main website:** bop.gov
- **Inmate Locator:** bop.gov/inmateloc
- **Communications & money:** bop.gov/inmates/communications.jsp
- **Find a facility:** bop.gov/locations
- **Central Office:** 202-307-3198
- **Trust Fund Deposit Helpline:** 202-307-2712 (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. ET)

Money Transfer

- **Western Union:** 1-800-634-3422 · westernunion.com (city code **FBOP, DC**)
- **MoneyGram:** moneygram.com · ExpressPayment receive code **7932**
- **National Lockbox (mail):** PO Box 474701, Des Moines, IA 50947-0001

Email & Historical Records

- **CorrLinks (TRULINCS):** corrlinks.com
- **National Archives (NARA) – pre-1982 records:** archives.gov

- The Trust Fund Deposit Helpline (202-307-2712) is specifically for missing or incorrect deposits – keep this number handy if a transfer doesn't post as expected.



About This Guide

This guide was created by **GovClarity**, an independent educational resource. We are **not affiliated with the Bureau of Prisons or any U.S. government agency.**

Current as of June 2026


Federal rules, rates, and transfer codes change — always verify with the official source on **bop.gov** before taking action.

Free Guides & Video Walkthrough

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Prefer Video?

Watch on YouTube: **@GovClarity**. Step-by-step walkthroughs of every process covered in this guide.

 This is an independent educational resource. Always confirm current information directly with the Bureau of Prisons at **bop.gov**.

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