

Expanding Access to Federal Release ID Cards

Identification That Supports Second Chances



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(BOP) - Last year, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (Bureau) launched the [Federal Release Identification Card initiative](#) to help individuals depart custody with reliable identification, supporting compliance with the First Step Act and Second Chance Act. Since the program's nationwide rollout in October 2023, the Bureau has generated an estimated 32,000 release identification cards for individuals returning to the community.

The initiative continues to grow. To ensure the program remains sustainable and accessible, the Bureau has expanded eligibility so that homeless individuals who meet all other requirements may now receive a Federal Release Identification Card. This change removes a significant barrier for some of the most vulnerable individuals transitioning back into the community.

Partnerships have also strengthened the program. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has confirmed that the Federal Release Identification Card will be accepted for domestic air travel. Once TSA completes its final technical and policy steps, the card will be officially listed on the TSA website as an approved form of identification. TSA has already coordinated with its training division to ensure officers are familiar with accepted documents at checkpoints. If a traveler encounters uncertainty, Transportation Security Officers can reference the card in their Checkpoint and Specialized Screening procedures.

While the card contains REAL ID security features, it is not REAL ID compliant and cannot be exchanged for a state-issued REAL ID. However, it can serve as proof of residency in many states, helping individuals obtain a REAL ID more easily.

Behind the scenes, the Bureau has significantly expanded its capacity to produce cards. As of February 2026, increased staffing has tripled production output, ensuring every institution can submit ID requests immediately and reducing processing times across the agency. Case Management Coordinator Offices play a critical role by overseeing the Government Instant ID system and ensuring photos and signatures are uploaded promptly before release. Collaboration with Unit Management remains essential to verify whether individuals already have valid identification in their central file.

If an eligible individual is unexpectedly scheduled for release or transfer within seven days, institutions should contact the Central Office Reentry Services Division to expedite processing. Effective communication and teamwork remain vital to ensuring every person departs with the identification they need for a safe and stable reentry.

The Federal Release Identification Card initiative continues to evolve, expanding access, strengthening partnerships, and improving the reentry experience for thousands of individuals each year.