

[Donate now](#)[Get involved](#)

FEDERAL PRISON FACILITY

June 24, 2026 by [Prison Fellowship \(https://www.prisonfellowship.org/author/prisonfellowship/\)](https://www.prisonfellowship.org/author/prisonfellowship/)



Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony at FCI El Reno Marks First Evidence-Based Recidivism Reduction Program in a Federal Prison by a Nonprofit Organization

OKLAHOMA CITY, June 23, 2026 —[Prison Fellowship](#)

[Get involved](#)

<https://www.bop.gov/inmates/fsa/docs/fsa-approved-program-guide.pdf?v=1.0.5>) under the First Step Act by the U.S. Department of Justice's Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

The new Prison Fellowship Academy demonstrates an expansion of the partnership between Prison Fellowship and the BOP, reflecting a shared commitment to rehabilitation and transformation. The program is just one of many Prison Fellowship initiatives expanding its footprint in the very prison system that once incarcerated its late founder, Chuck Colson.

The event included remarks from Heather Rice-Minus, president and CEO of Prison Fellowship; Joshua J. Smith, deputy director of the BOP; David Green, founder and CEO of Hobby Lobby; Derek Osborn, chief of staff for Oklahoma Senator James Lankford; and Ray James, Prison Fellowship Academy manager and former prisoner at El Reno.

"This partnership with the BOP not only represents major progress in bringing transformational programming to more people in federal prisons, but it also highlights the belief that no person is beyond redemption," said [Heather Rice-Minus](https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/media-information/speaker-bios/) (<https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/media-information/speaker-bios/>), Prison Fellowship president and CEO. "The Prison Fellowship Academy is designed to help participants prepare for a successful future, both inside and outside prison walls. We are honored to work with the BOP to expand its impact nationwide."

"I've seen firsthand the impact that ministries like Prison Fellowship have on the inmate population," said Joshua J. Smith, deputy director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. "It's exciting to envision the impact that this expanded partnership with Prison Fellowship will have on the incarcerated and their families, as well as on the

[Get involved](#)

group of people with similar backgrounds and criminal histories. Academy graduates leave the program as change agents, prepared to make a difference in their communities inside and outside prison.

The launch at FCI El Reno adds to Prison Fellowship's longstanding work with state correctional institutions nationwide, reflecting growing momentum around evidence-based rehabilitation efforts.

[Prison Fellowship Academy \(https://www.prisonfellowship.org/about/academy/\)](https://www.prisonfellowship.org/about/academy/)

The Prison Fellowship Academy is a yearlong, intensive program that invites all those living in prison to encounter Jesus. Through caring staff and volunteers, thought-provoking content, and intentional community, participants envision a new way of living. Regardless of faith, participants are equipped and empowered as change agents as they explore six core values—in the context of the Gospel and of their own stories—and all along the way, they are invited into a relationship with Christ.

[Prison Fellowship \(https://www.prisonfellowship.org/\)](https://www.prisonfellowship.org/)

Celebrating 50 years of prison ministry, Prison Fellowship is the nation's largest Christian nonprofit equipping the Church to serve currently and formerly incarcerated people and their families, and to advocate for justice and human dignity. Prison Fellowship and its church partners encounter Jesus with those behind bars, breaking cycles of crime and prayerfully anticipating a revival of justice, mercy and hope in our culture.

[Federal Bureau of Prisons \(https://www.bop.gov/\)](https://www.bop.gov/)

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is a federal law enforcement agency of the United States Department of Justice that is responsible for all federal prisons in the country and provides for the care, custody and control of federal prisoners.

[Get involved](#)

ABOUT PRISON FELLOWSHIP

Prison Fellowship is the nation's largest Christian nonprofit equipping the Church to serve currently and formerly incarcerated people and their families, and to advocate for justice and human dignity. Prison Fellowship and its church partners encounter Jesus with those behind bars, breaking cycles of crime and prayerfully anticipating a revival of justice, mercy, and hope in our culture.

For interview requests, please contact Susan Merriman at 303.775.2634 (tel:3037752634) or susan_merriman@pfm.org (mailto:susan_merriman@pfm.org).