

INSIDE OUT*A biweekly briefing on the federal prison system for families, defendants, and advocates* **Vol. 1 · No. 7 · Inmate Edition****Inside Out — July 24, 2026: MDC Brooklyn Death, Compassionate Release Rulings, and BOP's Tablet Rollout**

This issue covers a death in custody at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Brooklyn, New York; a set of federal court decisions this month narrowing and clarifying the standards for compassionate release under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A); the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) contract with Securus Technologies to distribute institution-issued tablets to people in custody; and continuing reporting on the BOP administrative remedy process and alleged retaliation against people who file complaints.

Also in this briefing: the closure of Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) La Tuna near El Paso, Texas, and what it may mean for pending designations and transfers; a Seventh Circuit ruling relaxing the standard for accepting late-filed notices of appeal from incarcerated pro se litigants; a summary of the U.S. Sentencing Commission's recently approved guideline amendments; and reentry items relevant to people leaving custody this summer.

One recurring theme this issue is documentation. Whether the topic is a compassionate release petition, a grievance filed under the BOP's administrative remedy program, or a tablet-based communication account, the practical margin for families and defendants often comes down to what has been written down, when, and where copies are kept. Practical guidance appears throughout, and a specific step readers can take this week is in the Practical Tip section at the end.

THIS WEEK'S LEAD**BOP Announces Death of Person in Custody at MDC Brooklyn**

Theme: deaths in custody / MDC Brooklyn / next-of-kin notification

On July 22, 2026, the Federal Bureau of Prisons issued a press release announcing the death of a person in custody at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) Brooklyn, a federal administrative facility in New York that holds both pretrial detainees and sentenced individuals awaiting designation or transfer. The BOP press release provides the identity of the decedent, the date of death, and states that the FBI, the BOP Office of Internal Affairs, and the local medical examiner have been notified — the standard notification pattern that follows an in-custody death.

The MDC Brooklyn is one of two federal detention centers serving the Eastern and Southern Districts of New York and has been the subject of extensive litigation and oversight reporting in prior years regarding conditions, medical care, and staffing. A death in custody triggers a specific set of legal and procedural obligations: notification of next of kin, a coroner's or medical examiner's investigation, an internal BOP after-action review, and — under the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA), 34 U.S.C. § 60105 — reporting to the Department of Justice.

For families with a loved one at MDC Brooklyn or any BOP facility, an announcement like this raises immediate practical questions about how notification works, what records exist, and what the family is entitled to receive. Those questions have concrete answers, and the answers matter regardless of whether this specific death implicates any broader concern.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

During incarceration

For people currently held at MDC Brooklyn or similar detention facilities

For people currently held at MDC Brooklyn or another federal detention center, an in-custody death typically produces short-term operational changes: locked-down movement, delayed programming, altered visiting or count schedules, and possible interviews conducted by the BOP Special Investigative Services (SIS) or the FBI. Cooperation with legitimate investigative requests is separate from any decision about statements — those decisions should be made in consultation with counsel.

This is a practical moment to confirm that your emergency contact and next-of-kin designations in your central file are current. Ask your Unit Team to verify the SENTRY record and, if needed, submit updates. If you have unresolved medical requests, submit or resubmit a written Inmate Request to Staff ("cop-out") so that your medical concerns are on paper and dated.

POLICY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES

The Death in Custody Reporting Act, 34 U.S.C. § 60105, requires federal law enforcement agencies — including the BOP — to report deaths of individuals in custody to the U.S. Attorney General, with specified data elements including circumstances of death. In plain English: every federal in-custody death generates a required federal-level report; that report is a discoverable record. BOP Program Statement 5553.08 (Escapes/Deaths Notification) governs internal notification procedures and is the operative internal policy for MDC Brooklyn staff.

Medical care standards in BOP facilities are governed by BOP Program Statement 6031.05 (Patient Care) and 28 C.F.R. Part 549 (Medical Services). For deaths where medical care is at issue, these are the governing standards against which conduct is measured. The Federal Tort Claims Act (28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2671–2680) is the vehicle for civil damages against the United States for negligence by federal employees acting within the scope of employment; a mandatory administrative claim on Standard Form 95 must precede suit, and the two-year clock runs from date of injury or death. FOIA (5 U.S.C. § 552) is the vehicle for obtaining most non-privileged records; requests are submitted to the BOP FOIA/Privacy Act Section at FOIA/PA Section, Office of General Counsel, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 320 First Street NW, Washington, DC 20534, or electronically through foiaonline.gov.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- If you have a loved one in any BOP facility, confirm this week that your name, phone number, and relationship are current on their emergency-contact designation. Ask them to raise it with their Unit Team if not.
- If your loved one has died in BOP custody, request the death certificate from the state vital-records office in the state of death; the BOP does not issue death certificates.
- File a FOIA request to the BOP FOIA/Privacy Act Section for the decedent's central file, medical records (with proper authorization from the estate's personal representative), and any incident reports, after-action reviews, and DCRA submissions.
- Request the autopsy report directly from the county medical examiner's office where the death occurred; autopsy reports are not held by the BOP.
- If facts suggest possible negligence or misconduct, consult an attorney about a Federal Tort Claims Act administrative claim on Standard Form 95 within two years of the death, filed with the appropriate BOP Regional Counsel.
- For allegations of staff misconduct, file a complaint with the DOJ Office of the Inspector General at oig.justice.gov and preserve copies of everything sent and received.

SOURCES

- [Death at MDC Brooklyn \(BOP press release\)](#) — Federal Bureau of Prisons

DEEP DIVE 2

Compassionate Release Rulings and Data This Month Underscore Preparation Requirements

Theme: compassionate release / § 3582(c)(1)(A) / summer 2026 rulings

Compassionate release is the shorthand for a sentence-reduction motion under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A), which allows a federal district court to reduce a sentence for "extraordinary and compelling reasons" after the incarcerated person has exhausted an administrative request to the BOP or waited 30 days from the warden's receipt of that request. The First Step Act of 2018 amended the statute to allow individuals — not just the BOP Director — to bring these motions.

This month, LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) summarized new data and two federal court decisions bearing on the state of compassionate release practice. The reporting describes low grant rates nationally and continued circuit-level variation in how courts apply the U.S. Sentencing Commission's amended policy statement at USSG § 1B1.13, which took effect November 1, 2023, and which defines what qualifies as "extraordinary and compelling." The month also brought the Seventh Circuit's decision addressing when late-filed notices of appeal by pro se prisoners should be accepted — a decision that touches compassionate release appeals directly.

The practical effect for readers is that a well-prepared § 3582(c)(1)(A) motion — one that squarely maps facts to the enumerated categories in USSG § 1B1.13 and addresses the sentencing factors of 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) — has meaningfully better odds than a general-hardship narrative. This deep dive walks through how to structure a request, how to exhaust administratively, and how the summer 2026 rulings affect strategy.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

During incarceration

Preparing a compassionate release request from inside

The statutory prerequisite is administrative exhaustion. A written request must be submitted to the warden of the facility. The request should identify the incarcerated person by name and register number, state the specific extraordinary and compelling reasons relied on, and explicitly request that the warden move on the individual's behalf under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i). Keep a dated copy. After 30 days from the warden's receipt — even without a response — the individual is free to file directly in the sentencing court.

The substance should track USSG § 1B1.13's enumerated categories, which include serious medical conditions, age combined with time served, family circumstances (death or incapacitation of a caregiver of a minor child or of a spouse), victims of abuse in custody, and "other reasons" of comparable gravity. Attach medical records, PATTERN scores if favorable, documentation of programming completed, and any letters of support. Anticipate the § 3553(a) analysis — the court must consider the same sentencing factors that governed the original sentence.

Courts routinely deny motions filed without administrative exhaustion. Courts also routinely deny motions that recite categories without factual specifics.

POLICY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES

18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) provides the statutory basis for sentence-reduction motions. In plain English: a federal court can shorten a sentence if extraordinary and compelling reasons exist and the § 3553(a) factors support it, after administrative exhaustion. 28 C.F.R. § 571.61 governs the internal BOP request procedure. BOP Program Statement 5050.50 (Compassionate Release/Reduction in Sentence) is the current implementing policy.

USSG § 1B1.13, as amended effective November 1, 2023, enumerates the categories that qualify as extraordinary and compelling: medical circumstances (subsection (b)(1)), age (b)(2), family circumstances (b)(3), victim of abuse in custody (b)(4), other reasons of comparable gravity (b)(5), and unusually long sentence combined with a change in law (b)(6). What this means for the story: the guideline is now the controlling framework in most circuits, and motions that ignore the enumerated categories are harder to win.

18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) is the general sentencing-factors statute the court must reweigh, including the nature and circumstances of the offense, history and characteristics of the defendant, need for the sentence, and available sentences. Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 4(b) sets the 14-day appeal window in criminal cases, and *Houston v. Lack* provides the prison mailbox rule. The First Step Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-391) is the source of the direct-filing pathway.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- If considering a compassionate release motion, submit a written request to the warden identifying yourself by register number, stating the specific extraordinary and compelling reasons, and citing 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i). Keep a dated copy.
- Start assembling documentation now: BOP medical records (obtainable through a written request to Health Services), programming certificates, PATTERN score printout from the Unit Team, and any letters of support.
- Ask family or counsel to build a written release plan: residence, employment or income, medical care, and transportation, on one to two pages.
- Identify which enumerated category under USSG § 1B1.13(b) applies and gather facts for that specific category. If medical, obtain a treating-physician letter describing diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment needs in plain English.
- If a motion is denied, calendar the 14-day appeal window under FRAP 4(b) from the date of the district-court order. If the notice is being handed to staff for mailing, keep a dated copy of the envelope.
- For attorneys, run the current circuit law on USSG § 1B1.13(b)(5) ("other reasons") and (b)(6) (unusually long sentence combined with a change in law) before drafting, as circuits differ.

SOURCES

- [It's Tough to Show Compassion — Update for July 16, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)
- [7th Circuit Says Courts Should Look for Reason to Accept Late-Filed Notice of Appeal — Update for July 20, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)
- [Hunting for 'Miscarriages of Justice' in Hunter — Update for July 14, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)

DEEP DIVE 3

BOP Contracts With Securus To Distribute Tablets System-Wide

Theme: tablets / Securus / communications and records

The Federal Bureau of Prisons has entered into a contract with Securus Technologies to distribute institution-issued tablets to people in BOP custody, according to reporting from LISA Newsletter. The rollout is described as extending across BOP facilities. Similar tablet programs are already in use in many state systems and in some federal facilities on a pilot basis. Tablets typically support messaging, phone-call placement, music, e-books, and — depending on configuration — access to educational content and legal-research databases.

For readers, tablets are a mixed-purpose tool. They can compress the time it takes to communicate with family and counsel, but they also generate new categories of records: message logs, call metadata, and — depending on the vendor's contract — content that can be reviewed by institutional staff. TRULINCS (the Trust Fund Limited Inmate Computer System, the existing BOP email system) has long included the notice that messages are monitored. Tablet messaging will operate under similar rules.

How this rollout affects a specific facility depends on installation timing, deposit and account setup for families, and vendor-specific policies. Program Statement 4500.12 (Trust Fund/Deposit Fund Manual) governs commissary and inmate-account operations that will likely touch tablet-service billing.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STORY

During incarceration

What tablet access changes for daily life

If tablets arrive at your facility, expect an initial orientation period. Read whatever written policy is distributed and keep a copy. Assume all communications on the device are monitored, logged, and stored, and that attorney-client privilege does NOT attach to messages sent through general tablet email or messaging systems. Legal communications should continue to move through Special Mail procedures under 28 C.F.R. § 540.18 and PS 5265.14.

Understand the billing structure before using paid features. Tablet minutes for calls, messages, or media are typically deducted from the individual's commissary account. Losing track of charges is a common early problem. Ask the Unit Team for a printed statement of tablet-related charges through the trust-fund system.

If a tablet is confiscated or restricted as part of a disciplinary action, that action is subject to the Inmate Discipline Program under PS 5270.09 and can be challenged through the administrative remedy process.

POLICY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES

BOP Program Statement 5265.14 (Correspondence) and 28 C.F.R. § 540.18 govern Special Mail — the mechanism by which mail marked to and from attorneys, courts, and other privileged senders is opened only in the presence of the incarcerated person. Nothing in the tablet rollout modifies these physical-mail protections. Program Statement 4500.12 (Trust Fund/Deposit Fund Manual) governs commissary and financial operations that will interact with tablet-service billing.

BOP Program Statement 5265.13 (Trust Fund Limited Inmate Computer System — TRULINCS) governs the pre-existing electronic messaging system; the rules on monitoring, consent (through user acknowledgment on log-in), and the non-privileged nature of messages are the framework tablet messaging will likely inherit. Program Statement 5270.09 (Inmate Discipline Program) governs sanctions for misuse of communications systems.

What this means for the story: any tablet functionality operates on top of an existing regulatory framework in which non-legal electronic communications are monitored and disciplinary consequences follow from prohibited use. Understanding those rules before the tablet arrives is more useful than reading them after a Prohibited Act charge is filed.

ACTION ITEMS THIS WEEK

- Ask your loved one to save (or print via the Unit Team) any written policy issued when tablets arrive at their facility; keep a copy on the outside.
- Before making the first deposit, confirm in writing which account is being funded (trust fund/commissary versus vendor communications) and what fees apply.
- Set a monthly communications budget and reconcile deposits and charges monthly against a printed trust-fund statement obtained via a written request to the Unit Team.
- Do not use tablet messaging for legal communications. Confirm the facility's method for privileged legal contact — Special Mail under 28 C.F.R. § 540.18, in-person visits, or scheduled unmonitored legal calls.
- If tablet content is at issue in a disciplinary or criminal matter, request preservation from Securus and from the facility SIS in writing.
- Continue physical mail for photographs, cards, and documents intended to be retained.

SOURCES

- [BOP Boldly Foreys Into the 21st Century — Update for July 13, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)

Systemic Issues Inside Out Is Watching

Patterns the publication is tracking this week from source material and court filings. Each entry includes factual description of the pattern and concrete guidance for readers affected by it.

Administrative remedy responses and reported retaliation

PATTERN

The BOP administrative remedy program — the formal grievance system codified at 28 C.F.R. §§ 542.10–542.19 — has been the subject of extended reporting this year, including a second installment of investigative reporting by The Marshall Project and NPR summarized by LISA Newsletter on July 22, 2026, focused on allegations of retaliation against people who file grievances. Separately, LISA's July 16 and July 22 posts describe patterns in which responses fall outside statutory timeframes and in which certain types of complaints are rejected on procedural grounds without reaching the merits.

The administrative remedy process requires informal resolution (BP-8), then a formal request at the institution level (BP-9), followed by regional appeal (BP-10), and finally central-office appeal (BP-11). Response times are set by regulation at 20 days for the BP-9, 30 days for the BP-10, and 40 days for the BP-11, with one extension permitted at each level.

WHAT FAMILIES AND DEFENDANTS CAN DO

Every filing at every level should be kept as a dated copy, with the receipt-stamped BOP form retained. If a response does not arrive within the regulatory timeframe (including any properly noticed extension), the requester may treat the absence as a denial and appeal to the next level; the appeal itself should reference the missed timeframe. If retaliation is alleged — transfers, cell changes, program removals, or incident reports temporally connected to a filing — document the sequence in writing, share copies with a person on the outside, and consider a separate complaint to the DOJ Office of the Inspector General at oig.justice.gov. For attorneys, exhaustion arguments in later litigation frequently turn on whether the timing of BOP responses excused the requirement, so preservation of the paper trail is decisive.

SOURCES

- [A Complaint? I'll Give You Something To Complain About... — Update for July 22, 2026](#) — LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates)

Facility closures and pending designations

PATTERN

FCI La Tuna, a low-security federal correctional institution near El Paso, Texas, is closing, with local reporting identifying open questions about where its incarcerated population will be transferred and how staffing decisions will be handled. This closure follows a multi-year pattern of BOP facility deactivations, temporary closures, and reopenings that affect where a person is designated to serve a sentence and how far families must travel to visit.

For defendants awaiting designation and for families of currently incarcerated people at affected facilities, closures translate into practical uncertainty about placement, program continuity (RDAP, education, vocational), and visitation logistics.

WHAT FAMILIES AND DEFENDANTS CAN DO

For pre-sentence defendants, ask counsel whether a judicial recommendation on designation is appropriate under 18 U.S.C. § 3621(b), and whether the recommendation should identify a facility, a region, or a program (such as the Residential Drug Abuse Program). Requests can be made at sentencing and on the record. For

people currently at La Tuna or another closing facility, ask the Unit Team in writing about the transfer plan, the effect on any FSA earned-time credits already accumulated, and continuity of medical care. For families, verify visitation, phone, and email arrangements before any transfer, and update the emergency contact if the receiving facility is in a different region.

SOURCES

- [La Tuna federal prison closure leaves questions about inmate transfers, employee futures](#) — KFOX
- [Former La Tuna employee raises concerns over federal prison's closure and layoffs](#) — KVIA

BOP Operations

Multiple people injured in fight at FCC Petersburg (Prince George, Va.)

WRIC ABC 8News · 2026-07-21

Reporting describes injuries from a fight at a federal facility in Prince George County, Virginia (Federal Correctional Complex Petersburg). Following a major incident, BOP facilities typically enter modified operations that can restrict movement, programming, and visiting. Families with loved ones at Petersburg should call the facility switchboard before making a trip to confirm visiting is running as scheduled.

Federal corrections officer charged with sexual abuse of incarcerated person at FCI Otisville

Mid Hudson News · 2026-07-21

A federal corrections officer has been charged with sexual abuse of an incarcerated person at Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Otisville, a low-security facility in Otisville, New York. Sexual contact between staff and incarcerated persons is prohibited under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2243(b) and 2244(a)(4). Incarcerated persons and families with concerns about staff sexual misconduct can report through the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) hotline, to institution PREA compliance managers, or externally to the DOJ Office of the Inspector General.

High-profile individual placed in restrictive housing after facility altercation

TMZ · 2026-07-24

News reporting describes an altercation involving a widely covered incarcerated individual and subsequent placement in the Special Housing Unit (SHU). SHU placement can be administrative (pending investigation) or disciplinary (after an incident report is sustained under Program Statement 5270.09). Families of any person placed in SHU should ask the Unit Team in writing which category applies and, if disciplinary, whether an incident report has been issued and when the Discipline Hearing Officer hearing is set.

Sentencing & Courts

U.S. Sentencing Commission approves sweeping guideline amendments

Baker Donelson · 2026-07-16

The United States Sentencing Commission — the federal agency that promulgates the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines (USSG) that inform federal sentencing — has approved a package of amendments to the Guidelines. Unless Congress acts to disapprove, amendments generally take effect on November 1 of the year they are transmitted. Pre-sentence defendants and their counsel should ask whether any amendment materially affects the applicable guideline calculation and whether sentencing timing is a factor to consider.

Seventh Circuit relaxes standard for accepting late-filed pro se notices of appeal

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-07-20

The Seventh Circuit issued a decision, summarized by LISA Newsletter, addressing when district courts should consider reasons offered by pro se incarcerated litigants for filing a notice of appeal outside the 14-day window in Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 4(b). The decision affects appeals in the Seventh Circuit (Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin). Pro se litigants elsewhere should still calendar and meet the 14-day deadline and rely on the prison mailbox rule of *Houston v. Lack* for date-of-handoff filing.

Debate over 'miscarriage of justice' standard following *Hunter v. United States*

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-07-14

LISA Newsletter analyzes the Supreme Court's decision in *Hunter v. United States* addressing waiver and what constitutes a miscarriage of justice sufficient to overcome procedural bars in post-conviction litigation. For readers

with pending 28 U.S.C. § 2255 motions or contemplating collateral attacks, the current state of the doctrine affects whether procedurally defaulted claims can still be reached. Consult counsel about how Hunter applies in the sentencing court's circuit.

Policy & Legislation

Conservative voices press Congress on federal expungement pathway

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-07-24

LISA Newsletter summarizes recent commentary from conservative outlets and former prosecutors calling for federal legislation creating an earned pathway to expungement of federal criminal records. Federal expungement is currently unavailable for most convictions outside of specific statutory carve-outs; legislative action would be required to change that. No bill is at final passage; the item is a signpost of ongoing legislative interest.

Reporting on shifting DOJ prosecution priorities

LISA Newsletter (Legal Information Services Associates) · 2026-07-23

LISA Newsletter, drawing on outside reporting, describes new caseload requirements imposed on Criminal Division Assistant U.S. Attorneys and continuing changes in departmental priorities. For defendants pre-charge or pre-plea, the practical effect on charging decisions varies by district. For post-conviction litigants, the reporting has limited direct effect but is worth watching.

Coverage of conservative criminal-justice reform activity

Forbes · 2026-07-15

Forbes describes ongoing advocacy from center-right organizations and legislators on federal criminal-justice reform, including record-clearance and reentry-focused proposals. As legislative developments mature, Inside Out will summarize concrete bills, their vehicles, and their effective dates.

Reentry

North Carolina man sentenced for escape from Residential Reentry Center

U.S. Department of Justice · 2026-07-16

A Raleigh man has been sentenced under 18 U.S.C. § 751(a) for escape from a Residential Reentry Center (RRC), commonly called a halfway house. Walking away from an RRC — or missing a scheduled return — is a separate federal offense in addition to being a disciplinary violation. Readers approaching RRC placement should confirm sign-out and return procedures with the RRC in writing on arrival.

Extended search follows walk-away from Raleigh reentry center

WCTI · 2026-07-17

Reporting describes an ongoing search after an individual walked away from a Raleigh RRC. The practical takeaway for people approaching RRC placement is that any expected absence — a medical appointment, court hearing, or job interview — should be preapproved in writing by RRC staff, with documentation kept on the individual's person.

PRACTICAL TIP

Confirm your central-file contacts and file a written medical or programming request in writing this week

Two documents can be verified this week that pay off across multiple scenarios later. First, the emergency contact and next-of-kin designation in the incarcerated person's central file (SENTRY record). Ask the Unit Team to confirm what is on file and to update it if needed. This designation controls who the BOP calls for a medical emergency, a death in custody, or a facility incident, and it is the anchor for FOIA and estate-related requests later.

Second, any pending medical need or program request (RDAP, education, work assignment, unit change) should be on paper. Submit an Inmate Request to Staff ("cop-out") this week identifying the specific request, keeping a dated copy. Written, dated requests are what start administrative-remedy timelines under 28 C.F.R. §§ 542.10–.19 if the request is not resolved informally, and they are the record that supports later escalation. Summer is also a natural time to verify RDAP interviews and fall halfway-house placements, both of which benefit from a written paper trail.

Inside Out will return in two weeks with continued coverage of compassionate release rulings, the U.S. Sentencing Commission amendment cycle heading into November 1, tablet rollout progress at named BOP facilities, and additional reporting on the administrative remedy process. Readers who need further assistance navigating a specific federal-prison matter can reach DrPrison.org at help@drprison.org.

NEED FURTHER ASSISTANCE?

Readers navigating a specific federal-prison matter — a designation question, a halfway house issue, an administrative remedy, a compassionate release motion — can reach DrPrison.org directly at help@drprison.org. Inside Out is a free service; no subscription required.

Inside Out is published biweekly by DrPrison.org. Founded by Dr. Patrick Fisher, PhD, LPC, NCC. Editorial contributions from lived-experience consultants including Ken Gaughan.

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