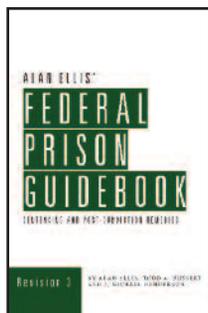


# BOOK REVIEWS

## Federal Prison Guidebook

2015-2017 Edition

By Alan Ellis, Todd A. Bussert & J. Michael Henderson  
James Publishing (2015)  
Reviewed by Henry J. Sadowski



My viewpoint on the 2015-2017 edition of the *Federal Prison Guidebook* is different from prior reviewers: I retired three years ago as Northeast Regional Counsel for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). I remember the first version issued in 1998. I felt (former NACDL president) Alan Ellis' initial guidebook filled the void resulting from the BOP decision to discontinue its own Directory of Federal Prisons. With each revision, Ellis enlisted other experts in the field as co-authors and expanded the scope of the *Guidebook* from a mere prison directory to almost an encyclopedia of anything pertaining to federal incarceration and sentencing. I can now admit freely that, even when I was in the BOP, I often consulted the *Guidebook* to answer questions about federal institutions, especially those outside the Northeast Region. Not surprisingly, given my 35 years in the Department of Justice, I disagree with some of the legal positions. It is perhaps more accurate to say I am aware of the legal counterarguments since I defended the BOP positions for many years. I will not use this review to quibble with the legal positions taken since I recognize the perspective of the

authors as advocates for the inmates. That said, the *Federal Prison Guidebook* is an essential resource providing vital information not just for defense attorneys, but for judges, probation officers, U.S. Attorneys, and, especially, clients and their families.

For those few who are not familiar, the *Guidebook* is essentially two books in one: (1) detailed listings of all the federal institutions and (2) substantive legal and practical guidance. For each institution, the federal prisons section includes location, directions, history, judicial district, security level, programs offered, type of housing (dorm vs. cell), phones, commissary, mail, visiting, and local hotels. This information is geared to assist defense attorneys to help sentenced clients and their families to adjust to incarceration. This same theme surfaces in the other section of the *Guidebook* addressing legal and practical guidance. There are 11 chapters in this section. Without detailing each one, suffice it to say that each chapter is necessary reading for any defense attorney with a client facing possible incarceration. The optimal time to read these chapters is before sentencing.

Three chapters stand out as crucial. The first chapter is a plain language walk through most aspects of BOP policies and concludes with a useful glossary of BOP lingo. The second chapter reviews the BOP designation process and offers suggestions on how to obtain a favorable institution placement. The institution designated by the BOP could have significant impact on the living conditions of the inmate and on the burdens on the inmate's family. Finally, the chapter titled "How to Do Time" should be required reading for any inmate entering federal prison. This chapter is in an interview format



with answers provided by former BOP staff. The issues addressed include what to bring, how to solve problems, what medical care is available, and what inmate families should expect. This chapter (like the other parts of the book) is bursting with practical common sense advice.

For those with prior versions of the *Guidebook*, we all know law is not stagnant; neither is the BOP. The revised version is an important tool to utilize in staying abreast of continual changes in federal sentencing and in the BOP. The *Guidebook* is an excellent reference and a great starting point whenever questions about federal sentencing and the BOP arise. ■

### About the Reviewer

Henry J. Sadowski served as Northeast Regional Counsel for the Federal Bureau of Prisons until he retired in 2011.

*The opinions expressed in reviews are those of the reviewers and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of NACDL.*