



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CORRECTIONS OFFICIALS REPORT PROGRESS ON ACCREDITATION EFFORTS AT STATE PRISON NEAR LEAKESVILLE**

Leakesville – Corrections officials at the South Mississippi Correctional Institution (SMCI) located near Leakesville report efforts are progressing on schedule toward gaining American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation at the Greene County based prison. SMCI's accreditation effort is designed to verify that its correctional programs comply with national standards developed by ACA.

Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) Commissioner Robert L. Johnson announced in May plans to gain statewide ACA accreditation by his agency. September 1, 2002 was set as the accreditation deadline for the three state prisons and an October 1, 2002 deadline was also set for the agency's Community Corrections Division which includes probation, parole, intensive supervision, and the division's 17 satellite facilities.

According to SMCI Superintendent David Turner, the prison is progressing rapidly in its preparation for an inspection next year by an ACA audit team. "We have every intention of gaining certification when that time arrives," said Superintendent Turner. He added, "We have three inspection teams who are monitoring our total operation to identify any areas of the operation found to be in noncompliance with ACA standards. Our goal is to correct these problems to assure that there will be no delay in our efforts to become a fully accredited facility."

Turner continued, "We have a challenging goal but we are equally determined to see that it is achieved. Hopefully, we will reach this mark of correctional excellence by May 2002, and, in so doing, we hope to become the first public prison in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' history to gain full accreditation."

According to correctional experts, accreditation has many advantages. It includes: the assessment of a facility's strength's and weaknesses, the identification of obtainable goals, the implementation of state-of-the-art policies and procedures, the establishment of specific guidelines for daily operations, an aid in the defense of frivolous lawsuits, an increase of community support, and a higher level of staff professionalism and morale.

