



NEWS RELEASE

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George County Community Work Center and Pascagoula Restitution Center Receive American Correctional Association (ACA) Recommendation

Jackson—Commissioner Christopher Epps today expressed his appreciation to the staff of the George County Community Work Center and the Pascagoula Restitution Center for their hard work and dedication in successfully demonstrating their ability to meet nationally accepted correctional standards. Following a 2-day audit at the George County CWC in Lucedale by American Correctional Association (ACA) auditors, the CWC received a recommended score of 100% on the mandatory standards and a recommended score of 99.46% on the non-mandatory standards. In addition, the Pascagoula Restitution Center in Pascagoula received a recommended score of 100% on the mandatory standards and a recommended score of 100% on the non-mandatory standards. Both facilities received the first and second highest scores awarded to date during the state of Mississippi's accreditation process.

"I congratulate both Commander Bobby Welch, of the George County CWC, and Becky Fulton, director of the Pascagoula Restitution Center, for a job well done," said MDOC Commissioner Christopher Epps. "This is a great day for the state of Mississippi and the Mississippi Department of Corrections."

The ACA auditing team arrived at George County CWC on Monday, Oct. 14, and at the Pascagoula Restitution Center on Wednesday, Oct. 16. They spent four days reviewing all MDOC policies and procedures; touring the work center and restitution center; and interviewed staff and inmates housed at both facilities. To be awarded accreditation, community work centers and restitution centers must comply with 100% of the 30 mandatory standards identified by ACA and comply with at least 90% of the 214 non-mandatory standards identified by ACA.

The ACA Auditing team was comprised of two veteran correctional professionals. The ACA Auditor Chairperson, William O'Sullivan, is currently a correctional consultant from Mount Sterling, Illinois. He has 30½-years experience in corrections and has been an ACA auditor since 1999. Chairperson O'Sullivan retired from the Illinois Department of Corrections after more than 30 years of service, the last 12 years serving as the warden of a 2,000-bed medium security facility in Mount Sterling. Previous to that assignment, he worked in facilities representing all custody levels — maximum, medium and minimum-security — work release, community corrections and parole.

"I've never been on an audit where the Deputy Commissioner has spent the whole time at the audit," said O'Sullivan. "This only shows where your (MDOC) spirit is, your heart is and your priorities . . . in relation to ACA."

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Joining him was Robert Conley, Sr., a correctional consultant from Hornbeak, Tennessee. Conley, who retired from the Tennessee Department of Corrections after 38 years in state government, has participated in over 60 ACA audits. During the 28 years Conley spent working in corrections, he has worked in several areas ranging from recreational assistant to warden in minimum and maximum-security facilities.

“This is the first and only 100% score on non-mandatory standards that I’ve seen and I’ve been auditing since 1988,” said Conley. “This is a perfect example of teamwork, which I attribute to the leadership. I commend you on your teamwork.”

“The most important thing here is the quality of life – clean, safe, many program opportunities, great environment and great repertoire with offenders and staff.”

George County CWC and the Pascagoula Restitution Center are both currently in candidate status. The ACA auditing team will now report its findings to the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections (CAC), which will hold an accreditation panel hearing. At the CAC panel hearing it will be decided if these two facilities are awarded accreditation.

Individual accreditation awards last for 3 years; however, the process is designed to be continuous. Accreditation is a system to verify that correctional programs comply with national standards developed by the American Correctional Association. The ACA Standards Committee continually revises the standards based on changing practices, current case law, and correctional agency experiences. Approved standards reflect the view of correctional practitioners, architects, medical and legal experts.

The advantages and benefits of accreditation are numerous and include:

- The assessment of a facility’s strengths 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 in community support; and
- A higher level of staff professionalism and morale.

The South Mississippi Correctional Institution (SMCI) received their Certificate of Accreditation Award from the American Correctional Association (ACA) in July. SMCI was the first state institution in its entirety to receive the prestigious designation. In addition, the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility (CMCF) in Pearl, Miss., received their recommendation for accreditation in September.

The Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, Miss., is in candidate status. The institution is preparing for its official site visit and review from an ACA audit team later this year.

“I am confident that all of Community Corrections and Miss. State Penitentiary will receive recommendation for accreditation,” said Commissioner Epps. “This process is raising the professional standards of corrections in Mississippi and demonstrating that MDOC employees are themselves professionals in corrections.”