



# PRESS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SEVEN MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS FACILITIES RECEIVE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION**

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Jackson, Miss. - The Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) announced that the American Correctional Association (ACA) recently awarded agency officials representing seven of its corrections facilities certificates of accreditation. The award presentations were made in conjunction with ACA's winter conference held in Charlotte, North Carolina. Receiving the highly coveted certification were the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, in Pearl, the Pascagoula Restitution Center, and five MDOC Community Work Centers (CWC's) located in Washington, Leflore, Yazoo, Madison, and George counties. Additionally, the Walnut Grove Correctional Facility and the Harrison County Detention Center were accredited.

"We are extremely delighted that seven of MDOC's facilities have joined an elite group of other professional correctional operations from across the nation by reaching this high threshold of excellence!" said Corrections Commissioner Christopher B. Epps. "Two years ago, our agency made a commitment to pursue the difficult and tenuous process to reach full statewide accreditation. Today, we have passed the 60% mark of our goal, and we anticipate that we will complete our effort by early fall of this year." MDOC's seven accreditation awards at the winter conference placed Mississippi as a lead state for the first-time accreditation category in Charlotte. Most of the other state and local facilities were receiving reaccreditation certificates.

The ACA accreditation program is tailored to enhance a correctional system's operation. The accreditation process is based on national standards developed by leaders from the field of corrections, law, architecture, health care and other groups who are interested in sound correctional management. Individual accreditation awards last for 3 years. However, the process is designed to be continuous.

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Accreditation is a system to verify that correctional programs comply with national standards developed by the American Correctional Association.

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.

In presenting the awards to the MDOC representatives, David Thomas, Chairperson for the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections (CAC) along with Charles Kehoe, President of ACA complimented the group and their staff on their professional level of operation, for their steadfast determination, and for their success in completing the accreditation process. The Mississippi Department of Corrections is one of over 1,500 correctional organizations currently involved in accreditation across the nation.

The Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, the Simpson County Community Work Center in Magee, and the Forrest County Community Work Center in Hattiesburg have been audited for compliance and have been recommended for accreditation. They are scheduled next to receive their accreditation certificates from ACA's Commission on Accreditation for Corrections in April.