



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Corrections Officials Report Progress on Agency Wide Accreditation Efforts

Jackson – Prison officials representing the Institutional and the Community Corrections divisions of the Mississippi Department of Corrections report that continued progress is being made by the department in its efforts to gain American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation of its agency-wide operation. MDOC began its arduous effort to attain accreditation in 1999. A large number of prison systems across the nation have achieved this goal, some have been accredited for several years.

According to Bobby Welch, Commander of the George County Satellite Facility, “Community Corrections administrative staff members have developed and implemented an audit tool for accreditation compliance. A committee was formed to review and rewrite any standard operating procedures concerning community corrections, which failed to address pertinent accreditation standards. Each office and facility is conducting on-going self-audits to measure the progress being made toward achieving accreditation status.”

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.

To obtain ACA Accreditation is a rigorous process. It signifies compliance with national standards in correctional operation and management and focuses on the policies and procedures related to correctional services, programs, administrative and fiscal controls, staff training and development, physical plant, safety and emergency procedures, sanitation, food service, rules and discipline. ACA Accreditation is achieved through a series of reviews, evaluations, surveys and audits.

Officer Juanita Walley, a 4-year employee at SMCI who works at the front gate stated “I feel that policy and procedures are one of the most significant aspects of the accreditation process. We need ACA to remind us of how policy and procedures affects all administrative staff, inmates and officers. Because ACA puts strong emphasis on cleanliness, our institution looks great and it helps us take pride in our work at SMCI.”

Gail Smith, FO III for Region II states, “ACA will create uniformity across the State of Mississippi and with other accredited correctional agencies. This management tool will reduce: the possibility of lawsuits against the agency, and will facilitate the agency’s utilization of manpower and services. The accreditation process is one that provides guidelines aimed at the betterment of the agency, the officers, the offenders and the community.”