



PRESS Announcement

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South Mississippi Correctional Institution Completes American Correctional Association (ACA) Audit

Jackson—Commissioner Robert L. Johnson today expressed his appreciation to the staff of the South Mississippi Correctional Institution (SMCI) for their hard work and dedication in successfully demonstrating their ability to meet nationally accepted correctional standards. Following a three-day audit at SMCI by American Correctional Association (ACA) auditors, the state institution located in Leakesville, Miss., received a score of 100 on the mandatory standards and 98.3 on the non-mandatory.

“I commend Superintendent David Turner and the staff at SMCI for embracing this challenge and receiving a recommendation for ACA Accreditation,” said Commissioner Johnson. “This is indeed a banner day for the state of Mississippi and the Mississippi Department of Corrections.”

The ACA auditing team arrived at SMCI on Monday, May 20. They spent three days reviewing all MDOC policies and procedures, the SMCI facility, and interviewed MDOC staff and inmates housed at the institution. To be awarded accreditation, SMCI must comply with 100% of the mandatory standards identified by ACA and comply with at least 90% of the non-mandatory standards identified by ACA.

The ACA Auditing team was comprised of three veteran correctional professionals. The ACA Auditor Chairperson, Clare Armstrong-Seward, is currently a captain at the Mohawk Correctional Facility in Rome, New York. She has 21 years of experience in corrections, has been an ACA auditor since 1994 and is president of the Correctional Accreditation Managers Association.

Joining her were Rita Maxwell, a Correctional Consultant from Midwest City, Oklahoma and Rebecca Craig, Director of the Institute for Medical Quality in San Francisco, California. Ms. Maxwell has been a corrections professional for 25 years, serving as an ACA auditor since 1991, and is the Past Oklahoma State President for the National Association for Blacks in Criminal Justice. Ms. Craig has over 21 years experience in corrections and is President of the American Correctional Health Services Association.

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SMCI is 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 SMCI is awarded accreditation.

“This has been an honor and a privilege to have such dedicated employees that have now met national standards established by criminal justice professionals,” said SMCI Superintendent David Turner. “This is truly the essence of teamwork and cooperation and it pleases me greatly to have SMCI be the first state institution to receive recommendation for full 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 Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, Miss., and the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility in Pearl, Miss., are in candidate status. Both institutions are preparing for their official site visit and review from an ACA audit team later this year.

“I am confident that both MSP and CMCF will receive recommendation for accreditation,” said MDOC Deputy Commissioner of Institutions Chris Epps. “This process is raising the professional standards of corrections in Mississippi and demonstrating that MDOC employees are themselves professionals in corrections.”

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