



NEWS RELEASE

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Simpson and Forrest County Community Work Centers Receive American Correctional Association Reaccreditation Recommendation

Jackson - Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) Commissioner Christopher Epps today expressed his appreciation to the staff of the Simpson County Community Work Center (CWC) and the Forrest County Community Work Center for their hard work and dedication in successfully demonstrating their ability to once again meet nationally accepted correctional standards. Following an audit at both community work centers by American Correctional Association (ACA) auditors, the Simpson County Community Work Center in Magee and the Forrest County Community Work Center in Hattiesburg both received a recommended score of 100% on the mandatory standards and a recommended score of 100% on the non-mandatory standards. Both CWCs were initially ACA accredited in 2002.

“I commend Deputy Commissioner Lora Cole, ACA Accreditation Manager Bobby Welch, Branch Director Sonny Edwards, Region 3 Director Jerry Williams, Commander Sherry Hearn of the Forrest County CWC and Commander Marcus Norman of the Simpson County CWC and their staff for embracing this challenge and receiving a recommendation for ACA reaccreditation,” said Commissioner Epps. “Initial ACA accreditation is extremely difficult, but maintaining the accreditation is even more challenging.”

The ACA auditing team spent four days reviewing all MDOC policies and procedures, touring the work centers, and interviewed staff and inmates housed at the work centers. To be awarded accreditation, the CWCs must comply with 100% of the 34 mandatory standards identified by ACA and comply with at least 90% of the 217 non-mandatory standards. “The Mississippi Department of Corrections has consistently put accountability to the public as a priority,” said Commissioner Epps. “The ACA reaccreditation, with its ever-improving standards, is proof that the MDOC is accountable to our peers as well.”

“With the ACA audits, overall professionalism among staff is enhanced and we are challenged to stay on the cutting edge in corrections. This ACA reaccreditation further verifies the tremendous effort of our staff,” said MDOC Deputy Commissioner of Community Corrections Lora Cole. 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; safer environment for staff and offenders; the establishment of specific guidelines for daily operations; reduced liability insurance costs; an aid in the defense of frivolous lawsuits; performance based benefits; an increase in community support; and a higher level of staff professionalism and morale.

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