



MISSISSIPPI
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PRESS RELEASE

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Jefferson and Wilkinson County Community Work Centers Receive American Correctional Association (ACA) Reaccreditation Recommendation

(Jackson) – Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) Commissioner Christopher Epps today expressed his appreciation to the staff of the Jefferson County Community Work Center in Fayette and the Wilkinson County Community Work Center in Woodville for successfully demonstrating their ability to once again meet nationally accepted correctional standards. Following an audit at both community work centers (CWC) by American Correctional Association (ACA) auditors, the facilities each received a recommended score of 100% on the mandatory standards and a recommended score of 100% on the non-mandatory standards.

“This recognition proves that the employees of MDOC are dedicated professionals who provide public safety based on national standards established by criminal justice professionals,” said MDOC Commissioner Chris Epps. “This is truly the epitome of teamwork and I’m proud of the professionalism at these facilities.” Epps added, “I commend MDOC Deputy Commissioner of Community Corrections Lora Cole, Community Corrections Director Christy Gutherz, Branch Director Sonny Edwards, Community Corrections ACA Accreditation Manager Bobby Welch, Jefferson CWC Commander Otis Bailey, Wilkinson CWC Commander Barbara Tyler and staff for their commitment to safety, teamwork and professionalism.”

The ACA auditing team was comprised of two veteran correctional professionals, Mr. J. Paton Dellow, ACA Chairperson and Correctional Consultant from Lincoln, Illinois and Ms. Lisa DiSabato-Moore, Probation Supervisor from Summit County Juvenile Court in Akron, Ohio. They spent four days reviewing MDOC policies and procedures, touring the centers, and interviewing staff and inmates housed at the work centers. To be awarded reaccreditation, the community work centers must comply with 100% of the 34 mandatory standards identified by ACA and comply with at least 90% of the 217 non-mandatory standards. “Without a doubt, receiving ACA re-accreditation is an enormous responsibility and it is made so much easier due to the great cooperation from the staff at these two facilities,” said MDOC Deputy Commissioner of Community Corrections Lora Cole.

In August 2008, the MDOC was presented its highest honor for commitment to excellence – the ACA Eagle Award, for its work to have all programs within its jurisdiction accredited. Mississippi’s prison system is just the fourteenth nationwide that can claim such an accomplishment.

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 ACA. The ACA Standards Committee continually revises the standards based on changing practices, case law and correctional agency experiences. The standards reflect the view of correctional practitioners, architects, medical and legal experts. Advantages and benefits of accreditation are numerous and include: assessment of a facility’s strengths and weaknesses; implementation of enhanced policies and procedures; 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.

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