



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS



PRESS RELEASE

Date: November 2, 2010
Contact: Tara Booth

Phone: (601) 359-5701
Email: tbooth@mdoc.state.ms.us

Mississippi Department of Corrections Field Services/Probation and Parole Division of Community Corrections Completes American Correctional Association Audit

Jackson— Once again showing superior knowledge and expertise in the field of corrections, the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) Field Services/Probation and Parole Division of Community Corrections has been accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA).

MDOC Commissioner Christopher Epps expressed his appreciation to the staff of the MDOC Field Services Division for their hard work, commitment and determination in successfully demonstrating their ability to once again meet nationally accepted correctional standards. In 2007, the MDOC Field Services/Probation and Parole Division of Community Corrections became the 15th field services division in the world to be ACA accredited.

American Correctional Association (ACA) auditors spent three days at various field offices of the MDOC auditing every aspect of probation and parole services. The MDOC Field Services Division is responsible for protecting public safety through the supervision of probationers and parolees in the community. In addition, field services staff are responsible for offenders in the intensive supervision program, on earned release supervision, and on compact from other states. As a result of the audit, the ACA auditors found the MDOC Field Services Division to be 100% in compliance for both the mandatory and non-mandatory standards. In total, 217 standards were met.

“I appreciate Deputy Commissioner of Community Corrections, Ms. Lora Cole, and the three Community Corrections regional directors, Mr. Lee McTeer, Ms. Christy Gutherz and Mr. Jerry Williams and the field services staff for embracing this challenge and being recommended for ACA reaccreditation,” said Commissioner Epps. “As president-elect of ACA, this accreditation means so much to me. I could spend all day praising the staff at the Mississippi Department of Corrections. These are professionals who take corrections very seriously.”

The ACA auditing team spent two days reviewing MDOC policies and procedures, ACA standards files, touring various field offices, and interviewing staff and offenders. To be awarded accreditation, the Field Services Division must comply with 100% of the mandatory standards identified by ACA and comply with at least 90% of the non-mandatory ACA standards.

“It took a complete team effort: clerical support, officers, supervisors, and directors and the dedication paid off,” said Deputy Commissioner Lora Cole. “I never had a doubt it could be done with the caliber of staff we have throughout the division. With over 35,500 offenders under community corrections supervision, I stand in awe of our staff. I truly appreciate their daily diligence.”

(more)

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 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.

