



NEWS RELEASE

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South Mississippi Correctional Institution Receives Official American Correctional Association (ACA) Accreditation Award

Jackson – The South Mississippi Correctional Institution (SMCI), located in Greene County near Leakesville, Miss., has become the first state operated incarceration facility in the history of Mississippi's prison system to receive the American Correctional Association's (ACA) *Certificate of Accreditation* award. SMCI, which began operation as a 500-bed medium security prison facility in April 1989, today has grown to a 2,214-bed prison and has 550 people in its employ. The presentation to SMCI officials was made at ACA's 132nd Congress of Corrections held at Anaheim, California.

SMCI Superintendent David Turner, who received the award from Geno Natalucci-Perischetti, Chairperson for the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections (CAC), heralded the presentation as an historic moment for the Mississippi Department of Corrections and a victory for the agency's efforts to further professionalize Mississippi's prison system.

"This award is a crowning achievement for our prison," said SMCI Superintendent David Turner. "To become Mississippi's first state operated prison in its entirety to receive this award is deeply gratifying. This accomplishment could not have been realized without the combined and untiring efforts of our loyal and dedicated staff."

The CAC audited SMCI on 41 mandatory standards and 442 non-mandatory standards. It received a 100% compliance score on the mandatory standards and a 98.58% on the non-mandatory standards.

The Central Mississippi Correctional Facility's (CMCF) 720 special needs medical unit, a portion of the 3,099 bed capacity prison facility, preceded SMCI in receiving the same recognition in January 2001. The balance of CMCF, which is currently in candidate status for accreditation, is making final preparation for the arrival of an ACA audit team on September 9. The auditing team will conduct a three-day review of the prison operation and report its findings back to CAC. Based upon the audit team's findings, the panel will decide if CMCF is awarded accreditation.

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Coincidental with CMCF's audit preparations, the Mississippi State Penitentiary is also readying itself for a visit by CAC auditors on October 7. Following their inspection of MSP, auditing teams will then focus their efforts statewide on MDOC's community corrections division, which entails probation and parole field operations, 17 satellite facilities, and four restitution centers.

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.

