



AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION
Celebrating More Than 135 Years of Global Excellence

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Overview of the Process

The American Correctional Association and the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections are private, nonprofit organizations that administer the only national accreditation program for all components of adult and juvenile corrections. The purpose of these organizations is to promote improvement in the management of a voluntary accreditation program and the ongoing development and revision of relevant, useful standards.

More than 1,500 correctional facilities and programs are involved in accreditation, a process that began in 1978. Approximately 80 percent of all state departments of corrections and youth services are active participants. Also included are programs and facilities operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the U.S. Parole Commission and the private sector.

For these agencies, the accreditation program offers the opportunity to evaluate their operations against national standards, to remedy deficiencies and to upgrade the quality of correctional programs and services. The recognized benefits from such a process include improved management, a defense against lawsuits through documentation and the demonstration of a "good faith" effort to improve conditions of confinement, increased accountability and enhanced public credibility for administrative and line staff, a safer and more humane environment for personnel and offenders, and the establishment of measurable criteria for upgrading programs, personnel practices, and physical plant on a continuous basis.

The requirements of the process are the same for all types of agencies-state, county, federal and private. All programs and facilities sign a contract, pay an accreditation fee, conduct a self-evaluation, and have a standards compliance audit by trained ACA consultants prior to an accreditation decision by the Board of Commissioners. Once accredited, all programs and facilities submit annual certification statements to ACA. Also, at ACA's expense and discretion, a monitoring visit may be conducted during the initial three-year accreditation period to ensure continued compliance with the appropriate standards.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for accreditation, an agency must be part of a governmental entity or conform to the applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations regarding corporate existence. The agency must

1. Hold under confinement pretrial or presentenced adults or juveniles who are being held pending a hearing for unlawful activity;



2. Hold under confinement sentenced adult offenders convicted of criminal activity or juveniles adjudicated to confinements;
3. Supervise in the community sentenced adult or adjudicated juvenile offenders, including youths placed in residential settings; and/or
4. Have a single administrative officer responsible for agency operations.

Status offenders should not be confined in juvenile facilities or secure correctional facilities. There will be situations where juvenile detention facilities and training schools that hold status offenders will be accepted into the process, although training schools containing status offenders may be required to remove them from the facility before or as a condition of accreditation. In either case, status offenders must be separated by sight and sound from delinquent offenders; facility staff should demonstrate attempts to develop opportunities for status offenders in the least restrictive environment possible to include alternatives outside a secure setting; and special programs must be developed for status offenders.





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Hands-On Training

While preparing for an audit, an agency may find itself requiring clarification of policy and procedure. ACA can provide on-site technical assistance and guidance to agencies. This is usually at the request of the agency and involves a fee. A field consultant visit typically entails a review of selected standards and documents prepared by the agency. Although there is an additional charge for technical assistance, the use of a consultant may prove to be cost effective when long term benefits are considered.

ACA also conducts auditor training each year at its conferences in January and August, as well as providing accreditation training for agencies beginning the audit process for the first time. In some cases, ACA staff can supply training on-site. Additional information about agency training is available from ACA regional managers.





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STANDARDS & ACCREDITATION



ACA auditors are professionals who are selected and trained by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections, (CAC). The average auditor has worked in corrections for over 18 years and has experience operating and evaluating the type of programs being audited. Auditors are also used for field consultation,

reaudits, and monitoring visits to accredited or certified programs. Auditors are frequently referred to as "consultants".

In order to be considered for a position as an ACA auditor, you must have five years of experience in corrections, three of which must be at the supervisory level, be a current ACA member, and be recommended by the director/CEO of your agency. Please send your résumé and recommendation, along with a cover letter to, Director, Standards and Accreditation Department, 4380 Forbes Boulevard, Lanham, Maryland 20706.





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