

## **Bismarck Transition Center passes ACA Standards Compliance Audit; Prepares for August Commission Meeting**

*May 4, 2005 (Bismarck, North Dakota).* Community, Counseling, and Correctional Services, Inc. (CCCS) Chief Executive Officer Mike Thatcher and Bismarck Transition Center Administrator Marcie Conmy-Fisher announced today that the facility recently passed a standards compliance audit conducted by auditors from the American Correctional Association (ACA) and the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections (CAC) on April 18-19, 2005.

The Bismarck Transition is a 63-bed community-based transition center for offenders who are preparing to re-enter their communities following incarceration. The facility has been open since 2002; is operated by Community, Counseling, and Correctional Services, Inc.— a Montana-based not for profit corporation; and is located at 2001 Lee Avenue in Bismarck.

If successful in the accreditation process, the Bismarck Transition Center will be the third facility operated by CCCS accredited through the ACA and one of three other programs/facilities in North Dakota to achieve this distinction.

During the two-day visit to the Bismarck Transition Center, the two-person audit team reviewed standard files; toured the facility; interviewed staff and offenders; and observed daily operations. Compliance auditors are correctional practitioners with a minimum of five years' of managerial experience. Auditors from Indiana and Ohio conducted the audit at the Bismarck Transition Center.

The Bismarck Transition Center achieved compliance with 100% of the 33 applicable mandatory standards and 99.5% of the 201 applicable non-mandatory standards. In fact, the facility only missed one (1) standard. Standards cover the following areas: general administration, fiscal management, personnel, training and staff development, offender records, information systems and research, citizen involvement and volunteers, physical plant, security and control, safety and emergency procedures, rules and discipline, offender rights, special management housing, food service, sanitation and hygiene, health care, reception and orientation, classification, social services, academic, vocational, and work programs, library services, recreation, religious programs, mail, telephone, and visiting, and release preparation.

The compliance audit was the culmination of twelve months of work that began in spring 2004 by corporate and facility administration and a cross-functional staff team. In preparation for the compliance audit, staff reviewed and updated internal policies and procedures and created files to document compliance with the rigorous and often-times technical standards.

The next step in the accreditation process for the Bismarck Transition Center will occur in August when corporate and facility officials appear at a formal hearing before a panel of the CAC at the Summer Conference of the ACA in Baltimore, Maryland. This panel will review the findings of the standards compliance audit and will make the decision to award accreditation.

CCCS officials are optimistic that accreditation will be awarded. According to Mike Thatcher, Chief Executive Officer of CCCS.

“We are very excited about the results of the audit and remain guardedly optimistic that the Commission will award accreditation. The quality of our services and the superior level of staff professionalism truly qualify our facility for the distinction of ACA accreditation.”

North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (ND DOCR)—who contracts with CCCS for the operation of the Bismarck Transition Center—officials also lauded the CCCS Bismarck Transition Center accomplishment.

According to Elaine Little, ND DOCR Director:

“The diligence of the Bismarck Transition Center staff to work toward national accreditation as well as the commitment of the entire CCCS organization to deliver only the highest quality services and programs fits well with the high standards set by the ND DOCR and the Governor. Indeed, it is this dedication to the finest and most effective correctional services that distinguishes North Dakota from other state correctional systems. The Bismarck Transition Center joins the ranks of the North Dakota State Penitentiary and North Dakota Division of Juvenile Services/Community Services that have already achieved the distinction of accreditation.”

Warren Emmer, Field Services Director for the ND DOCR added:

“By achieving accreditation for the Bismarck Transition Center, CCCS will set the bar for other potential service providers in North Dakota and else where. Compliance with national standards ensures us [the Department] that taxpayer dollars are wisely spent on those programs and services that have the greatest potential to impact change for the offender and thusly improve the safety of our communities for current and future generations.”

Accreditation is granted for a three-year period. During this time, the facility must maintain its standard compliance levels and implement plans of action for those standards for which the facility did not comply at the time of the audit. CAC monitors accredited facilities through periodic visits and the submission of annual reports detailing the progress toward full compliance. If compliance levels are not maintained, a facility's accreditation may be revoked.

The ACA and CAC are private, not-for-profit organizations that administer the ONLY national accreditation program for all components of the adult and juvenile correctional system. 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 are involved in accreditation, a process that began in 1978. Approximately 80 percent of all state departments of corrections and youth are active participants. Also included are programs and facilities operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the District of Columbia, and the private sector.

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