

TN

Department of  
Correction



# January Update

Spotlight on ACA Review and WTSP Mission Change

Tennessee Department of Correction | January 2016



# Overview

Earlier today the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) presented an update on the American Correctional Association (ACA) recommendations before the Senate Corrections Subcommittee. During this presentation, Commissioner Derrick Schofield gave details on how TDOC has implemented many of the ACA recommendations and shared plans regarding the mission change at West Tennessee State Penitentiary.

## **Summary of ACA Review**

Last year the Department of Correction requested the American Correctional Association to conduct an independent assessment of several of our prisons. Specifically we asked ACA to focus on issues related to vacancies, scheduling, incident reporting procedures, as well as an overall assessment of facility operations. ACA assigned a team of veteran correctional professionals to conduct the assessment, and a report of their findings was provided to the Tennessee General Assembly and department staff.

The ACA team determined that our prisons were operationally disciplined, stable, and productive. The team also recognized the professionalism and dedication of our staff which enables the department to achieve its core mission of ensuring public safety. The report included two alternative solutions to address concerns regarding staff scheduling and inmate disciplinary categorization. The feasibility of the recommendations was considered and they were reviewed to ensure that any changes made increase offender accountability, add clarity, and reduce subjectivity.

## **Key Findings**

- The ACA Proposal recommends changing to a 14-day work period and 12-hour shifts within the current FLSA time keeping system.
- The second recommendation removes injury as a defining term in disciplinary rules and changes several disciplinary offenses.

## **Schedule Update**

### **Current State**

The Department of Correction partnered with the Tennessee State Employees Association (TSEA) and sent a survey to the staff on the 6:3 schedule rotation. These results were shared in December 2015 and each facility submitted their scheduling decision by January 1, 2016.

### **Next Steps**

The Department is working with the four facilities that selected a 12-hour shift to create schedules that reflect this change. Training for their human resources team and on-going communication for the affected staff will take

*Six facilities selected to stay on the 8-hour shift. Four facilities opted to move to the 12-hour shift.*

place throughout the next month.



## ***Incident Update***

### **Current State**

Despite reports to the contrary, the Department of Correction has always valued accuracy in incident reporting and transparency of information. The recent ACA review pointed out opportunities for the department to improve the clarity and objectivity of definitions.

The ACA review made several recommendations in the area of incident reporting:

- Remove injury as a defining term in disciplinary rules,
- Remove several disciplinary offenses (including assault and staff/inmate provocation), and
- Add several disciplinary offenses (including assault with weapon and assault without a weapon).

All of the suggested changes had to be thoroughly vetted to ensure all modifications made increase offender accountability, add clarity, and reduce subjectivity. This included reviewing our incident policies and definitions and determining if any other policies would be impacted by modifications to our incident policies.

### **Next Steps**

After careful review, the Department is pleased to report that all of the recommendations are being implemented. The new policy regarding “Definitions of Disciplinary Offenses” will go into effect on Monday, January 11, 2016. At this time, policy trainings are occurring at our facilities to update the staff on the changes. This training will help ensure the uniformity and consistency of the policy application.



## ***West Tennessee State Penitentiary Mission Change***

Over the past year, TDOC has examined the mission of each prison and sought out areas where efficiencies could be gained. A recurring theme is the need for more beds and programming for female offenders. For several years, the female offender population has consistently increased with only minimal increase of female bed space.

This spring the mission of West Tennessee State Penitentiary will change. Site 1 will convert to a female facility and Site 2 will operate as a maximum-security male prison. Each site will operate independently. This mission change will assist in managing the growing female population and provide instant relief to our partners operating county jails. As more details become available they will be shared with the TDOC team and the community.

## ***Final Thoughts***

The Tennessee Department of Correction is committed to the mission of operating safe and secure prisons and providing effective community supervision in order to enhance public safety. More than 6,000 Tennesseans work as Correctional Professionals to ensure that the communities we serve are safer. While we don't profess to be a perfect organization, this department is committed to a system of continuous improvement by constantly reviewing our practices, updating as needed and piloting the most innovative methods in offender management.