

ACA Statement on Accreditation

Founded in 1870, ACA is the oldest and largest professional correctional organization in the world. ACA represents all disciplines within the corrections profession and has accreditation standards for each.

The accreditation program and each of the individual standards and sets of standards were developed with input from practitioners and experts in the field, debated and adopted in committee and then published. The standards are periodically reviewed and updated to reflect current, practical and broadly-accepted correctional policies and practices in the profession. The goal of the program is to help ensure the overall level of professionalism within a correctional facility and to safeguard the life, health and safety of both the staff and inmates.

The accreditation process is voluntary and involves a series of onsite reviews, evaluations, audits and inspections that verify compliance with the national minimum standards during a three-year period. The unbiased and randomly selected auditors are experienced and highly regarded professionals in the field who have been trained and certified by the independent Commission on Accreditation for Corrections (CAC), which is also responsible for conducting the accreditation hearings and verifying that those agencies applying for accreditation comply with the applicable standards.

Recently, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) was given high marks during audits of five of its facilities and nearly all CCA facilities are currently accredited. ACA President Harold Clarke said, "It is testament to their commitment and dedication to excellence. The ACA is proud to be associated with such a fine corporation." Dr. Lannette Linthicum, Chairwoman of the CAC and Medical Director at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice added that, "We stand behind the integrity of the audit process, the auditors and those facilities that have achieved accreditation. Privately run correctional facilities, including those operated by the Corrections Corporation of America are treated no differently than the many other local, state and federal correctional facilities currently involved in ACA accreditation. Accusations to the contrary are unfounded and misleading."

ACA is a non-profit professional association with 501(c)3 status. It holds no administrative or executive authority over the many local, state, federal and private correctional institutions across the country. CCA's involvement with accreditation is voluntary and a result of their own initiative and desire to be among the best, most safe and well-managed facilities in the country. The costs of accreditation are modest and the fees paid to ACA by CCA were comparable to those paid by similar facilities. ACA Executive Director James Gondles reminds critics that, "Governments retain the ultimate responsibility, authority and accountability for the offenders under its jurisdiction as well as for actions of private agencies and individuals under contract." The Public Correctional Policy adopted by the 19,000 members of the ACA states that, "For its most effective operation, corrections should use all appropriate resources, both public and private. Governments should consider use of private sector correctional services and programs only when such programs or services: are needed; meet professional standards; ensure necessary public safety; provide the best value to the taxpayer; and are, equivalent to or better than those offered by the public sector.