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DJS RECEIVES ACA ACCREDITATION HONORS

J. DeWeese Carter Center is the First Juvenile Facility for Girls in Maryland to Receive National Accreditation

Baltimore, MD – The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services' (DJS) J. DeWeese Carter Center in Chestertown, MD has received national accreditation from the American Correctional Association (ACA) and the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections. The all-female committed hardware-secure campus is the first juvenile facility for girls to receive national accreditation in the State of Maryland and now one of about 500 facilities nationwide. Earlier this year, the Victor Cullen Center was the first DJS facility to receive ACA accreditation.

“With Carter as our only hardware-secure facility for girls in the state, it is very important for the Department to ensure that the program meets national juvenile justice standards and best practices,” said DJS Secretary Sam Abed. “I am so appreciative of the staff that worked diligently to get us to this point, allowing us to provide better outcomes for these young ladies.”

ACA standards are the national benchmark for the effective operation of correctional systems throughout the United States and are necessary to ensure that facilities are operated professionally. The ACA standards address services, programs and operations essential to good facility management, including administrative and fiscal controls, staff training and development, physical plant, safety and security, justice and order, medical, education, food service, human resources, rules and discipline, and community relations. Standards reflect practical, up-to-date policies and procedures that safeguard the life, health and safety of staff and youth.

On April 8, 2019, the ACA audit team spent three days at the Carter Center reviewing hundreds of standards, as well as speaking to staff and youth. The facility met all 40 mandatory standards and all but six of the 331 non-mandatory standards, for a final compliance rating of 98%.

“The consistent efforts of all staff assigned to Carter and the support of the department heads from headquarters were evident throughout this entire process,” said DJS Deputy Secretary of Operations Wallis Norman. “The outcome resulted in a successful audit that demonstrated positive culture and systems which enhances services for our youth.”

Preparation for the accreditation audit started more than two years ago. Through that time, DJS developed an accreditation plan, which involved support from various departments including maintenance, fiscal, human resources, research and data evaluation, policy and planning, medical, food service, behavior health, training, Attorney General's office, and the Maryland State Department of Education. In addition, more than 100 policies were re-written and/or established to prepare the Department for its first accreditation audit at the Victor Cullen Center.

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Other tasks were completed during this time at Carter, which included replacing the locking system in the living units and improving the landscaping in several areas of the campus.

The J. DeWeese Carter Center serves youth who have been ordered by the courts to receive treatment services in a secure environment. The treatment program serves female youth primarily between the ages of 14 and 18. The facility provides dietary, medical, educational and counseling services, as well as space for recreation. In addition to receiving services, youth residing at Carter attend school in the facility year-round, five days a week for six hours a day.

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