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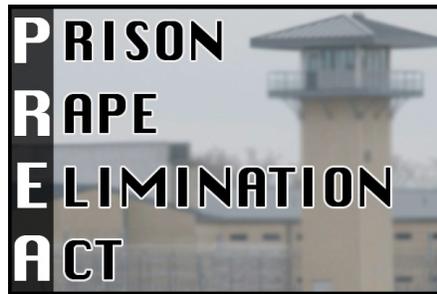
Agency News

ACA auditors to review zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has requested the American Correctional Association (ACA) begin auditing TDCJ facilities for compliance with Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. According to Executive Director Brad Livingston, the ACA review will benefit the agency even though full compliance is unlikely because of concerns regarding one PREA standard.

“Compliance with one requirement intended to enhance offender privacy may not be feasible due to the restrictions that would be imposed on female staff working in male institutions,” said Livingston, “but the remaining standards are consistent with the agency’s zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse. It will be a PREA compliance audit, but since the standards, with one exception, mirror agency policy, it’s actually a good review of our own procedures and practices.”

PREA Ombudsman Ralph Bales said the request demonstrates a strong commitment to the agency’s zero-tolerance policy as well as



the spirit and intent of the federal PREA legislation.

“I applaud the agency’s diligence and commitment to enhancing the current policies and procedures to gain compliance with the PREA national standards, with perhaps one exception. The request to initiate the audit process with the ACA is indicative of the leadership’s commitment to the zero-tolerance policy and general support of the standards,” said Bales.

Bales added that he looks forward to reviewing the results of the audits and continuing to work with the TDCJ and the Office of the Inspector General to protect offenders from sexual abuse.

The ACA auditors are expected to begin site visits to TDCJ facilities in late August. The agency expects about 30 facilities will be included in the first round of audits, with additional facilities being reviewed over the next two years.

The ACA was recently certified by the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct PREA compliance audits. Representatives of the ACA have frequently visited TDCJ facilities in conjunction with the association’s accreditation process. Bill Stephens, director of the Correctional Institutions Division, said he appreciated the ACA review team adding Texas to their agenda.

“ACA auditors have consistently demonstrated professionalism and a thorough understanding of prison operations,” Stephens said. “I am certain their services are in high demand right now and thank the organization for accommodating our request.” ●