

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A mug shot can be found at: http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/newsroom_downloads_images.aspx

American Correctional Assn. Rates YRTC-K High in All Areas

Lincoln – After a team from the American Correctional Association audited the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney, they announced the facility is 100 percent compliant on 38 mandatory requirements and 99 percent compliant on 333 non-mandatory measurements, said Thomas Pristow, director of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services.

“Although it’s not unusual for us to receive 100 percent compliance on the mandatory requirements, the 99 percent compliance on non-mandatory measurements is a new high,” he said. “The results show that once again, YRTC-K meets the national standards for operating a juvenile state facility, which has been the case since accreditation was earned 33 years ago.”

The auditors visited with 60 youth and 45 staff at the YRTC-K, and complemented the quality of work with the youth and noted that neither staff nor youth said they feared for their safety, Pristow said. Highlighted by the auditors were the facility’s programs in education, maintenance, religion, recreation, mental health, food service and medical departments, and the living units and treatment program.

Pristow said the audit team reported they were impressed with the YRTC’s physical plant, noting that while buildings are old, they are well maintained, and positive level of staff to youth ratio. Overall, the auditors said the facility left them with a very good impression.

They noted that staff told them they are glad to work at the YRTC-K and want to help youth.

Three non-mandatory areas found to be non-compliant were daily temperatures in the Food Services refrigeration were not consistently recorded, there was a lack of documentation of daily checks of service staff and youth for illnesses, and there’s a need for 15 more minutes of exercise each day for residents of the Dickson unit.

“The auditors said the YRTC-K is meeting the national standards for the operation of a juvenile state facility,” Pristow said. “This means there is safety, security and quality of life for the youth under our care. Our focus will continue to provide treatment services for youth.”

In addition, suggestions were offered to assist YRTC-K heading forward. A detailed written report will be provided in late summer, he said. The three-day audit is conducted every three years.

Pristow said the final step in the accreditation process is a panel review in August of the auditors' findings when ACA officials will question YRTC management.

The ACA audit team included:

- Denis Shumate of Beloit, Kansas, is a recipient of ACA’s highest honor, and has worked 40 years in public service, including 35 as superintendent of the Beloit Juvenile Correctional Facility. He has audited facilities for more than 25 years for ACA.
- Laura Tafoya of New Mexico is correction administrator/quality assurance manager for the New Mexico Corrections Department. She has 25 years of experience in the field.
- Michael Radon of Petersham, Massachusetts, is an ACA auditor and chairs an accreditation team of experts, providing a comprehensive audit, reviewing nationally recognized standards in correctional settings, drug and alcohol residential facilities and community-based facilities. Radon also contracts with the Federal Bureau of Prisons.