

NEWSRELEASE

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Montana State Prison health services earns national accreditation

The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) has awarded accreditation to health services at Montana State Prison, completing a five-year process for the health care professionals at the Deer Lodge facility.

The prison's health services are in compliance with all of the 36 essential standards established by the national organization and with all of the 29 important standards.

"The standards are NCCHC's recommended requirements for the proper management of a correctional health services delivery system," the commission said in notifying the prison of its achievement. "These standards have helped correctional facilities improve the health of their inmates and the communities to which they return, increase the efficiency of their health services delivery, strengthen their organizational effectiveness, and reduce their risk of adverse patient outcomes and legal judgments."

Warden Mike Mahoney praised the work of the prison's health care staff for reaching this nationally recognized milestone.

"This accreditation is a tribute to the outstanding work done by the dedicated staff members who were determined to reach this goal and not let anything deter them from their accomplishment," he said. "This accreditation tells everyone that Montana State Prison has achieved a level of health care that ensures inmates receive appropriate, efficient and effective care in a correctional setting."

"The message here for Montanans in general and offenders in particular is that we are dedicated to doing it right, every day, for every patient we have," said Cathy Redfern, health services administrator for the Department of Corrections. "Now we are committed to maintaining these standards into the future."

In December, a NCCHC review team applauded the prison's health services following a two-day inspection of the facility. Team members cited the staff's teamwork, professionalism and competency, using terms such as "phenomenal" and "excellent" in discussing what it sometimes described as ground-breaking services provided the more than 1,400 inmates at the prison.

"This is an excellent survey," Barbara Mariano, team leader, said at the time. "You don't realize how good this is. It's been an honor to be here."

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Nearly 500 institutions nationally are accredited by the NCCHC, a program started by the American Medical Association in the 1970s. Accreditation is a process of review by outside experts that results in public recognition for correctional facilities that meet the organization's nationally accepted standards for health services.

Accreditation brings prestige to a program, increases staff morale, helps in recruiting health care workers, reduces the potential for losses in health care litigation, and provides assurances to the public, inmates and staff that incarcerated offenders are receiving adequate and appropriate health care.

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