

NEWSRELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Allegations Prompt Investigation at Correctional Center

(HELENA) – An investigation is under way by Powell County authorities and the Montana Department of Corrections into allegations of mistreatment of offenders by some staff at the Treasure State Correctional Training Center at Deer Lodge.

The allegations are directed at a limited number of staff and do not involve claims of physical injury to “trainees” at the boot camp. Two drill instructors were suspended with pay Oct. 16 pending completion of the investigation.

Mike Ferriter, department director, said Thursday the agency takes seriously any allegations of staff misconduct and that the investigation will be thorough, fair and prompt.

“We consider the trust placed in us by the public to properly manage and supervise offenders to be crucial to our mission,” he said. “If the investigation determines improper actions occurred, anyone involved will be dealt with appropriately.”

Ferriter said the center, often referred to as the boot camp, is a key component of the corrections system. The facility continues to operate near capacity and the staff remains focused on the mission of the program.

“The safety and security of offenders in our custody always have been primary concerns of the department, and that will be reflected in the way we handle this matter,” he said.

The department notified Powell County authorities of the allegations Oct. 17. Ferriter declined to speculate on whether criminal charges could be filed and said the department cannot release any additional information regarding the ongoing investigation. Further inquiries should be directed to Powell County officials, he said.

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The training center, which has a capacity of 60 offenders and 27 staff, offers an alternative to prison for some offenders. Those accepted into the highly disciplined program are diverted from the main prison population for 90-120 days of intensive programming in such areas as victimology, criminal thinking errors, and anger management. Trainees also receive chemical dependency counseling and are afforded some educational opportunities. Successful completion of the program may result in a shortened prison sentence or parole.

(NOTE TO EDITORS: Dan Burden, Treasure State Correctional Training Center superintendent, will have a news conference at 3 p.m. at the center. Please call 846-1320, x2100, if you are interested.)

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