DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON CORRECTIONAL STANDARDS

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN AUDIT

STANDARDS MANUAL

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Preparation for an MCCS audit should begin immediately following the last inspection. It is a good idea to listen to the auditors' suggestions offered during the inspections. Often at times, recommendations on how to improve with preparation are given at the exit conference. Your audit should be much easier, more relaxed and shorter in time if you are well prepared. Here are some tips to help you.

- Have various categories of your staff involved in the audit preparation. Delegate direct accountability to these staff persons. For consistency, assignments should last throughout the audit interim.

- Designate an audit coordinator to oversee the entire operation with periodic reports to the managing official. The audit coordinator needs the authority to be able to approach other staff members, sometimes of higher rank, for the required documentation.

- Review each standard individually. Refer to the Standards Manual for compliance criteria and explanations.

- Conduct periodic self audits using the Standards Worksheets as a guide. Network with other managing officials. Pre-audits should take place at least six months prior to the actual event in order to allow time to make adjustments where needed.

- Make sure your policies and procedures meet the standards requirements. When revising a policy and procedure, if you are not sure the revision will enhance compliance, ask MCCS staff to review it before implementation. Routinely assess your policies and procedures against the actual practices and documentation.

- Develop a tickler system to monitor those functions that are required to be performed and documented at specific frequencies (weekly, monthly, annually, etc.). This is also an effective way to keep up with other regulatory agency inspections like fire, MOSH, health, and menu approval.

- Correct maintenance repairs as needed. Maintain the physical plant in the best condition possible at all times.

Once you have been contacted by MCCS and have agreed upon the audit dates, you should do the following to ensure a smooth inspection.

- Walk through your facility to make sure the physical plant is in the condition you want the audit team to see. Check for sanitation, lighting, fire safety (extinguishers, smoke detectors, annunciator boards, posted exits, etc.), excess inmate property, security breaches, sanitary laundry procedures, maintenance repair issues, staff appearance and inmate order.

- Advise all supervisory and line staff of the audit dates and the purpose of the inspection. Staff that are involved and understand the purpose are more likely to take pride in doing a good job. Review the Audit Process section of the Standards Manual so you will know what to expect.

- Select a private area, such as a conference room, where the auditors will be able to review documentation.

- Review all secondary documentation to ensure it is complete. Centralizing this information in clearly marked files and/or boxes will help the auditors get through it quickly. Move the secondary documentation to the area where the auditors will be working. Have escorts available to take audit team members to other places in the facility where secondary documentation may be located.

- Go through all secondary documentation to make sure it is in order by standard. Chronological order is also important.

- Designate tour guides ahead of time. These should be staff persons familiar with the facility's layout and who can get through every area without problems. Keys or other means of access should be readily available to the escorts. For large facilities, the tour is usually split in half with two separate teams of auditors. This would necessitate two teams of escorts. Logistics should be worked out ahead of time. A practice run could be done to work out any potential problems.

- Documentation to show compliance with standards requiring staff training/awareness may be presented separate from other information. A complete and up-to-date employee roster should be prepared. The roster should list names, positions, and dates of employment. Be sure to include contractual employees and regular volunteers. Sign-offs for complete policy and procedure manuals, individual directives, and the inmate handbook are acceptable. Formal training, whether pre-service or in-service, is also acceptable. Summary documentation is preferred as it speeds up the auditing process for training-related standards.

- Computer entries are acceptable with appropriate hard copies available for cross-checking.

- When you receive the pre-audit descriptive narrative outline on diskette and/or hard copy, designate its completion to a single person. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, look at your previous audit report for style and format. Update your previous report as needed and transfer that information onto the diskette or hard copy. Complete the policy and procedure requirements on the worksheets by referring to the previous audit's submission. Return this information to MCCS by the due date.

- Just before the audit team's arrival, request inmate volunteers to be interviewed as part of the process. The volunteers may be officers of your Inmate Advisory Council, if you have one, or a diverse group randomly selected from the general population.

The Commission staff and Duly Authorized Inspectors approach the audit process as consultants and problem solvers. The keys to a successful audit include cooperation and open communication between auditors and facility managers before, during and after the inspection. MCCS believes that working together toward the common goal of standards compliance will have a positive impact on corrections in this state. With cooperation, communication and networking with neighboring facilities, the Audit Process can benefit all of us. The Commission staff remains ready to provide technical assistance to you.