



The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) first became accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA) in 2003. This achievement distinguished the MCSO as the first nationally accredited local jail system in North Carolina.

The accreditation is maintained through regular audits and re-accreditation processes, which typically occur every three years. Most recently, in April 2022, the MCSO was awarded the "Triple Crown" status by achieving simultaneous accreditation from the ACA, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC)

Why is ACA Accreditation important?

ACA accreditation is considered the "gold standard" in the corrections profession. It is a system of verification that correctional facilities and agencies comply with national standards for effective operation. The standards address services, programs, and operations essential to good correctional management, such as:

- Administrative and fiscal controls.
- Staff training and development.
- Safety and emergency procedures.
- Sanitation and food service.
- Rehabilitation programs and health care.

To earn accreditation, a facility must comply with 100% of mandatory standards and at least 90% of non-mandatory standards. Audits involve visual inspections, policy and procedure reviews, and an evaluation of the work being done to ensure best practices are met.

ACA accreditation offers numerous significant benefits for Sheriff's Offices:

Improved Operations and Management

- **Standardized Procedures:** The accreditation process provides a framework based on national "best practices" to standardize policies and procedures across the agency.
- **Performance Measurement:** It establishes measurable criteria for evaluating and upgrading operations, staffing, and physical plants on a continuous basis.
- **Enhanced Data Management:** The process leads to improved record maintenance and data management capabilities.
- **Increased Efficiency:** Compliance with standards helps streamline operations and increase overall efficiency.

Enhanced Safety and Security

- **Safer Environment:** Adherence to standards related to security operations and emergency procedures creates a safer, more humane environment for both personnel and inmates/offenders.
- **Risk Management:** Standards focus heavily on health, safety, and risk management, which helps prevent incidents and ensures effective response when they do occur.

Legal and Financial Advantages

- **Defense Against Lawsuits:** The rigorous documentation and compliance provide a strong defense against lawsuits and demonstrate a "good faith" effort to improve conditions, often leading to reduced litigation and liability.

- **Reduced Insurance Costs:** Accredited facilities often benefit from lower liability insurance costs and workers' compensation costs.

Professionalism and Accountability

- **Increased Accountability:** Accreditation enhances accountability for administrative and line staff by clearly defining lines of authority and expectations.
- **Improved Staff Morale:** The commitment to professional standards and staff development often leads to enhanced staff morale and professionalism.
- **Public Credibility:** It provides objective, third-party validation that the facility is operating at a high national standard, which increases public credibility and government confidence.
- **Professional Development:** Staff benefit from access to professional development opportunities, training, and a nationwide network of correctional professionals.

Ultimately, ACA accreditation serves as a comprehensive management tool that helps the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office achieve and maintain correctional excellence.