



A Statement from the South Carolina Department of Corrections

For Immediate Release

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SCDC Providing More Cost-Effective Medical Services

Altering Policy Regarding HIV Positive Inmates

(Columbia, S.C.) – The South Carolina Department of Corrections is in the process of reorganizing many of its health and programming services to provide better, more efficient and cost effective care for nearly 22,000 inmates incarcerated in its 26 institutions across the state.

One of the many changes in the Health Services area includes developing a plan for a “Central Health Services” campus at Broad River Correctional Institution in Columbia. This would permit more on-site medical/mental health services for inmates with acute care needs. This practice would also reduce the number of off-site trips, increase public safety, keep more correctional officers in the institutions, and reduce costs. Collaborative efforts with Palmetto Health Systems, The USC School of Medicine, MUSC and local providers will provide more efficient and cost effective care for inmates over time. Plans also call for agency health care records to be fully converted to an electronic format, Psychiatry and Mental Health Services improvements, and nursing and dental staff reviews, just to name a few.

As a part of the SCDC medical services review, the decision was also made to end a long standing policy that separates inmates infected with the HIV virus from the general population. Since October, 1998, inmates who test positive for the HIV virus at incarceration into the Department of Corrections have been separated from the general population and housed in dedicated facilities known as Therapeutic Communities. SCDC currently houses a total of 366 inmates (351 men and 15 women) infected with the HIV virus at two different institutions in Columbia. Broad River Correctional Institution, a Level-3 maximum security prison, houses the male HIV Positive inmates while Camille Griffin Graham Institution, also a Level-3 maximum security prison, houses the female inmates.

The South Carolina and Alabama Department of Corrections are the only two state correctional systems that still separate HIV Positive inmates from their general population. Late last year, a federal court judge ordered Alabama DOC to end that practice. The litigation involving the Alabama case is still ongoing. “Our medical staff has examined all facets of this issue, and we believe it is safe to make a change in our current policy,” SCDC Director William R. Byars, Jr. emphasized.

The timetable for implementing all the changes to medical services at the Department of Corrections is ongoing. A date has also not yet been determined for when the actual integrating of HIV Positive inmates into the general population will begin. Extensive staff and inmate education and training will be conducted prior to full-scale initiation of the new policy. “This is part and parcel of a general review and revamping of our overall medical services. We want to be timely and consistent with the care of our inmates while also being as economical as is possible,” Byars concluded.