



MDOC Unveils First-Ever Nail School, Opening Doors to Opportunity and Second Chances

PEARL – Female inmates at the Mississippi Correctional Institute for Women now have the opportunity to be trained to become licensed nail technicians.

The Mississippi Department of Corrections on Sept. 10 announced the opening of the first nail program in the state prison system. The Central Mississippi Beauty College at MCIW is certified through the Mississippi State Board of Cosmetology and Barbering.

“Dreams come true, and this is one of them,” said Commissioner Burl Cain at the grand opening on the grounds of the Rankin County prison. “We know that to be successful on the street, you have to have morality, and you have to have a job. You can have independence and make a living, support your family, and support yourself.”

The new school has been in the works for two years, Superintendent Kate Head said, but the finishing touches were put in during the last three months, after she assumed leadership of the prison, which held 945 women on Thursday.

“Today is about much more than a new school,” she said. “When I stepped into this role, one of the things that was important to me was making sure the women at MCIW had opportunities to learn, to grow, and to do something that they didn’t have when they came here.”

Like Commissioner Cain, she thanked the inmates and staff for helping to reach opening day. “For the women who will eventually walk through these doors, the school provides opportunities to learn a skill they will take beyond MCIW. We are celebrating a possibility, an opportunity, and second chances.”

The first class consists of 16 students and two student instructors, along with Instructor Terrica Knight Hatten. The students will receive 500 hours of instruction in roughly 17 to 18 weeks, according to Hatten.

The new program for women in the state prison system should help meet market demand for nail technicians and improve employment prospects for inmates licensed upon completion.

Catherine Bell, executive director of the Mississippi State Board of Cosmetology and Barbering, said the demand for licensed nail technicians is increasing across the nation and in Mississippi.

“Nationwide, nail technology has seen an expansion of clientele that includes not only women but also men. Mississippi is no exception. There are nail technology schools on the Coast, in Hattiesburg, and in North Mississippi; however, Central Mississippi has not had an independent nail school,” Bell said.

Just hours after the opening, Bell said the new school will fill the gap in education and training as the only independent nail technology school in Central Mississippi. “I am delighted that Central Mississippi Beauty School will be providing a path for licensure and gainful employment for incarcerated women,” Bell said.

Inmates must be free of rule violations for at least six months to participate in the nail program. Classes will run 17-18 weeks with 500 hours of instruction. Inmates will learn manicure and pedicure skills, among others, and are licensed upon graduation. With 16 students enrolled now, the next class will begin in February 2027. Two student instructors also assist the head instructor.

Inmate Alana McCammon, a mother of one, is in the first class and said she plans to pursue a career in a nail salon to be ready to move on when she becomes eligible for parole next year.

“My future looks brighter now that this has happened. This will help a lot of women here, and I am glad the women will get opportunities they didn’t have before now,” McCammon said. Inmate Kietra Owen said she is looking forward to participating and continuing her education. “I was already in school for entrepreneurship before I came here. After I am released, I will go home and incorporate what I learn here into that plan and move forward. This is a great niche that falls right in line with what I was looking to do,” Owen said. “I intend to take full advantage of every opportunity this provides while I am here.”

Commissioner Cain called the nail school a perfect example of MDOC job programs to teach inmates skills for better lives after incarceration. With the governor’s support, the goal is to create programs that reduce recidivism, he said. “We know to be successful on the street, you have to have morality, and you have to have a job,” Commissioner Cain said.



