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MDOC Reducing Inmates at Regional Facilities

JACKSON – The Mississippi Department of Corrections is decreasing the number of inmates at regional facilities to contractual levels because it doesn't have the money to pay counties more.

The Legislature did not fund a \$3.6 million deficit in the regional program in the current budget year.

"I informed lawmakers in writing and at several committee hearings that the agency needed deficit appropriations for four areas: Medical, private prisons, regionals and local confinement combined for a total deficit of nearly \$20 million this year," Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall said. "We took measures to erase the shortage in local confinement and communicated that. However, budget appropriations addressed deficits in private and medical only."

The department values its relationship with counties, Commissioner Hall said, however, the agency sees no other option after reviewing its finances.

Linking the reopening of the Delta Correctional Facility in Greenwood to the regional program is deceptive, considering how transparent MDOC has been about the reason for using the facility, Commissioner Hall said.

"Delta is housing offenders not classified for regionals, and MDOC is operating this facility, not a private contractor, using money from the consolidation of four facilities," Commissioner Hall said. "So why bring up Delta?"

Letters have been sent to all sheriffs housing inmates above the contractual level to notify them of MDOC's decision.

MDOC has agreements with all regional facilities to house MDOC inmate populations above the required minimum at \$20 per day versus the rate of \$29.74 per day.

The department has been housing additional inmates at the regionals because of the closure of some SMCI units resulting from lack of staffing/officer safety concerns. However, the department has no choice but to maximize the use of existing staff to securely house those returning offenders. Delivery of programming will be hampered because of the lack of additional staff to perform those functions.

“One sheriff explicitly told MDOC to come get the inmates if the agency could not pay the full per diem of \$29.74 for all inmates housed at his facility,” Commissioner Hall said. “MDOC is now doing that, and the sheriff is now complaining.”