

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Board on Jail Officer Standards & Training

Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting Details

Date: Thursday, January 15, 2026 **Time:** 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM CST **Location:** Mississippi Department of Public Safety Planning, 152 Watford Parkway Drive, Canton, Mississippi **Presiding Officer:** Missy Saxton, Chair, Mississippi Community College Board **Official Reporter:** Ella J. Hardwick, CVR-M, CCR #1749

2. Attendance

Board Members Present

- **Missy Saxton**, Chair, Mississippi Community College Board
- **Amy Vanderford**, Director, Standards and Training
- **Ronnie Bowen**, Chief, Amory Police Department
- **Ward Calhoun, III**, Sheriff, Lauderdale County
- **Travis Patten**, Sheriff, Adams County
- **Ford Hayman**, Chief, Clinton Police Department

DPS Planning Staff Present

- **Josh Broman**, Executive Director, Public Safety Planning
- **Tawni Basden**, Director of Finance
- **Marie Fivecoat**, Standards and Training
- **Ryan Gholson**, ACADIS System Manager

Guests and Presenters

- **Mindy Higginbotham**, Lieutenant / Instructor, Rankin County Adult Detention Center / Rankin County Law Enforcement Training Institute
- **Brand Huffman**, Superintendent, South Mississippi Correctional Institution, Mississippi Department of Corrections
- **Amanda Huffman**, South Mississippi Correctional Institution, Mississippi Department of Corrections

- **Daniel Barnett**, Captain, Rankin County Sheriff's Office
- **Chad Wicker**, Director, Tate County Sheriff's Office
- **Jeff Johnson**, Deputy, University of Mississippi and Tunica County Sheriff's Office
- **Ronnie Partlow**, Captain, Lee County Sheriff's Office
- **Clay McPherson**, Deputy, Simpson County Sheriff's Office
- **Neal Wailes**, Deputy, Simpson County Sheriff's Office

3. Call to Order and Opening Exercises

Chair Missy Saxton called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 AM.

The opening prayer and Pledge of Allegiance were led by Sheriff Calhoun and Chief Bowen. Roll call was conducted verbally for the official record.

4. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the prior Board meeting were presented for review.

Action Taken: Chief Bowen made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Chief Hayman seconded the motion. **Vote:** The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Old Business

Director Vanderford and Ms. Fivecoat confirmed there was no pending old business or tabled items from prior sessions.

6. New Business and Committee Reports

A. Course Curriculum Review and Committee Formation

Director Vanderford reported that the current detention officer curriculum originated around 2004 through the National Sheriffs' Association and has not received a comprehensive update since approximately 2008. The Board discussed the need to review and modernize the curriculum, noting that the existing curriculum is approximately 17 years old.

Lt. Mindy Higginbotham of Rankin County addressed the Board regarding current training needs. She emphasized that correctional work and law enforcement practices continue to change and that current training should better address areas such as mental health, de-escalation, juvenile management, contraband searches, and practical, hands-on case studies. She recommended moving away from passive lecture-based instruction and increasing practical training exercises.

Superintendent Brand Huffman of the Mississippi Department of Corrections discussed the need to align and potentially streamline MDOC facility training standards with county and local jail standards. The goal would be to reduce redundancy and improve consistency across corrections training environments.

The Board discussed the need to coordinate with the Mississippi Attorney General's Office for formal legal guidance before adopting any curriculum changes. Director Vanderford agreed to contact the Attorney General's Office for guidance.

Action Taken: Chief Bowen made a motion to establish a Curriculum Review Committee composed of subject matter experts to evaluate and propose modernizations to the jail officer training curriculum and report recommendations to Director Vanderford and the Board, pending legal review. Sheriff Calhoun seconded the motion. **Vote:** The motion was unanimously approved. **Note:** Appointment of the Committee Chairperson was deferred to the next regular meeting.

B. Officer Certifications and Instructor Slates

Ms. Fivecoat presented the backlogged and current candidate slates for adult detention officer certification. She reported that the certifications included items processed since she took over the desk on October 6, 2025, as well as a current list of 27 individuals certified or in process since that date.

Action Taken: Sheriff Patten made a motion to approve the slate of certified officers. Chief Bowen seconded the motion. **Vote:** The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Fivecoat also presented the active roster of detention instructors across approved facilities.

Action Taken: Chief Hayman made a motion to approve the instructor slate. Sheriff Patten seconded the motion. **Vote:** The motion was unanimously approved.

C. Approved Training Facilities and Compliance Rules

Ms. Fivecoat confirmed that 19 approved training academies and detention centers are currently recognized statewide.

The Board reviewed accreditation and compliance standards. Approved academies are required by rule to hold at least two classes per year to maintain active accreditation. Facilities that fail to meet minimum training standards or fail to submit class rosters and required documentation within 30 days may be subject to accreditation review or lapse.

D. ACADIS System Modernization Update

Ryan Gholson, ACADIS System Manager, provided an update on implementation of the ACADIS system.

Mr. Gholson explained that ACADIS is being implemented to replace legacy paper file rooms with unified electronic tracking across law enforcement, detention officers, and telecommunicators. The system will allow agency heads and authorized points of contact to view personnel within their organization, review training records, track annual training criteria, process applications, and manage renewals.

Mr. Gholson reported that approximately 100 agencies and 2,900 officers have been ingested into Phase 1 for law enforcement. Phase 2 will include detention and communications personnel.

Online applications for certifications are expected to begin rolling out in February 2026. Full operational deployment across all divisions is projected to take approximately 12 to 18 months due to the need to verify legacy records.

Mr. Gholson also discussed planned training videos and tutorials, which will be made available through the main website. These resources will assist agency ACADIS points of contact, agency heads, and applicants with processes such as account setup, application filing, application approval, certification processing, and renewals.

The Board also discussed the importance of online separation forms. Once implemented, these forms will allow agencies to file separations electronically in approximately five minutes. The separation reporting process is intended to track inter-agency transfers, misconduct investigations, and prevent unauthorized re-hiring across jurisdictions.

Future enhancements may include a public-facing portal for verification of active officer certification status.

E. Financial and Reimbursement Guidelines

Tawni Basden, Director of Finance, provided an overview of reimbursement requirements and compliance expectations.

Ms. Basden clarified that the statutory 45-day reimbursement processing window begins only after complete and accurate documentation has been received.

A standardized reimbursement checklist was provided to the Board and distributed to agencies. The checklist identifies required supporting documentation and common compliance issues.

Key reimbursement requirements discussed included the following:

- **Salary Reimbursement:** Base pay only is reimbursable. Reimbursement is limited to actual classroom hours, such as 96 or 120 hours, as applicable. Overtime is not reimbursable. Complete prior-month payroll stubs showing the hourly rate are required.
- **Tuition and Invoices:** Agencies must provide proof of payment, such as a cleared bank check showing front and back, or a paid credit card statement with a zero balance. Floating checks are not permitted.
- **Lodging and Per Diem:** Hotel receipts must be itemized and show a zero balance. Lodging must comply with Department of Finance and Administration rate limits. Meal reimbursements follow DFA rates, with first and last travel days reduced to 75 percent, or a maximum of \$51 per day. Taxes are not reimbursable for tax-exempt entities. Tips are limited to a maximum of 20 percent calculated on the pre-tax subtotal. Travel must generally be more than 50 miles from the officer's duty station or home.
- **Mileage:** Mileage reimbursement applies only to use of personal vehicles at the official state rate. Mileage is not reimbursable for agency-owned vehicles.

- **Personally Identifiable Information:** Social Security numbers and other sensitive information must be redacted before documents are uploaded into MAGIC.
- **Timeliness:** Requests must be filed within 30 days of training completion. Prior fiscal year claims, including outdated FY23 and FY24 claims, cannot be honored.

F. Compliance and Enforcement Directive

Executive Director Josh Broman and Director Vanderford emphasized strict compliance expectations for agencies.

Agencies that fail to submit required rosters, applications, separation reports, or proper reimbursement documentation may forfeit state reimbursement funds and may also risk eligibility for certain federal grant programs.

Current certification metrics were reported as follows:

Category	Number
Total Certified	1,348
Adult Certified	1,173
Juvenile Certified	175
In Compliance / Pending Within Two-Year Window	380
Non-Compliant	389

Staff will conduct active outreach and provide virtual assistance to agencies. Staff also discussed presenting information at upcoming Sheriffs' Association and Chiefs' Association conferences to educate agency heads and improve compliance.

7. Next Meeting and Scheduling

The Board agreed to establish a recurring schedule and meet at least once every three months, or quarterly.

The next regular Board meeting is slated for April 2026, tentatively targeting the second Thursday of the month. Director Vanderford will distribute the official date and location by email.

8. Adjournment

Action Taken: Sheriff Calhoun made a motion to adjourn. Sheriff Patten seconded the motion. **Vote:** The motion was unanimously approved. **Time Adjourned:** 11:30 AM CST.

Minutes prepared from the official transcript of proceedings taken January 15, 2026.