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Announcement of Personnel Action at the Aaron Cohn RYDC

(COLUMBUS) — Today, Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner L. Gale Buckner authorized another in a series of recent personnel actions designed to enforce safety and security reforms in the Georgia DJJ System. The Commissioner announced a staff termination targeting the DJJ facility in Columbus, Georgia.

Juvenile Corrections Officer Mike Brown was terminated from the Aaron Cohn RYDC facility in Columbus based on misconduct policy violations for alleged improper use of physical intervention techniques. Brown was also cited for failure to accurately document the incident, which was first reported as a sports-related injury on a basketball court. As a result of the Columbus RYDC incident a resident under the care and custody of the Department was treated and released at a local hospital.

The termination at the Columbus RYDC is the latest personnel action in the Commissioner's continuing crackdown on staff misconduct, security breaches and policy violations at DJJ secure facilities statewide. Immediately after her appointment in November 2011, Commissioner Buckner assembled Safety and Security Teams to launch unannounced facility inspections and investigations. The Teams began their work at the YDC in Augusta following the November beating death of a youth in custody there.

Commissioner Buckner has been in office less than three months. The DJJ Special Inspection Teams have examined twenty-six DJJ secure facilities throughout the state in just seven weeks. Some facilities, like Augusta YDC, have been the target of repeat inspections.

"Through surprise inspections and staff interviews we have uncovered violations of policy and contraband and misconduct repeated at other facilities and we're wasting no time taking these administrative actions wherever they're needed," said Commissioner Buckner. "As we expected, our statewide security sweeps and facility inspections have already had a positive impact, improving conditions at our secure campuses across Georgia."

However Commissioner Buckner predicted she expects more violations to come to light as these DJJ investigations continue. Buckner promised DJJ will respond with more terminations, suspensions and other disciplinary measures in cases of misconduct, or follow-up with re-staffing, re-training and refresher courses where needed.

"We're taking immediate steps to fix those DJJ problems we can control now and the Department continues to fast-track administrative and corrective actions wherever state investigators find our corrections staff have committed misconduct or violated any safety and security policies," said Commissioner Buckner. The DJJ Commissioner said the agency is wasting no time removing policy violators from positions of responsibility over Georgia's youth in detention anywhere in the state.

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