

L. Gale Buckner, Commissioner
Jim Shuler, Director
Office of Communications



DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

3408 Covington Highway ▪ Decatur, Georgia ▪ 30032-1513
Telephone: (404) 508-7147 ▪ Fax: (404) 508-7341

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CONTACT:

Jim Shuler, Director
DJJ Communications
(404) 508-7238

JimShuler@djj.state.ga.us

Announcement of Personnel Action at the Augusta YDC

(AUGUSTA) — Today the Commissioner of the Department of Juvenile Justice issued another termination letter for a Juvenile Corrections Officer at the YDC facility in Augusta. DJJ Commissioner L. Gale Buckner announced the dismissal of JCO Tracy Banks. Officer Banks had been suspended with pay while a team of investigators looked into allegations of an inappropriate relationship involving Banks and a resident under the care and custody of the Department.

Along with today's administrative action, Commissioner Buckner issued a stern warning with severe penalties for any DJJ staff members involved in such serious policy violations.

"I find this latest officer misconduct case particularly egregious," said Commissioner Buckner. "Because the events and blatant policy violations that lead to the termination of JCO Tracy Banks for inappropriate conduct occurred even after we publicly announced we were bringing in agents from DJJ and the GBI to open investigations into misconduct cases at the Augusta YDC."

Today's termination followed a day-long lock-down in Augusta last Tuesday as a team of twenty GBI agents worked with investigators from the Department of Juvenile Justice to conduct interviews with YDC residents and the entire Augusta staff for evidence of employee misconduct and contraband at the facility.

"Apparently we have some policy violators who might think we're done, but we're not," warned the Commissioner. "After our administrative probe is complete, the GBI investigations will continue and then criminal charges will be pursued." Details of this and other incidents at the Augusta YDC and statewide DJJ secure facilities are being withheld pending the conclusion of the active investigations.

Last week at a State Capitol briefing, Commissioner Buckner told Augusta lawmakers the Juvenile Justice agency is using its findings to make corrective disciplinary actions and enforce policy changes at all its secure facilities around the state. DJJ will compile its investigative findings for an action report to Governor Nathan Deal and DJJ Board members around mid-February. Until then, Commissioner Buckner continues to make swift safety and security fixes wherever corrective actions are needed to protect Georgia's youth in detention.

"This is a warning," said Commissioner Buckner. "We will not tolerate violations of our policies that compromise the security of the youth we serve, the integrity of this agency, and the safety our staff. We've had a lot of personnel changes at Augusta YDC and it's not over yet."

More terminations are expected.

(END RELEASE)