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DEPT of JUVENILE JUSTICE OPENS NEW ATLANTA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CAMPUS
(ATLANTA, GA) Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner L. Gale Buckner is pleased to announce the opening of the agency's newest Youth Development Campus (YDC) in metro Atlanta today. The newly renovated eighty-bed Atlanta YDC correctional facility is designed to serve the juvenile detention and rehabilitation needs of the Atlanta metro area. Forty-percent of the Georgia youth committed to DJJ reside in the Atlanta community.

Up until now, the closest YDC facilities to Atlanta were located as far away as Macon, Augusta and Columbus. Without this new Youth Development Campus in Atlanta, many of the young detainees to be committed here might never see their families the entire time they serve their juvenile sentences.

"We encourage parents to visit our facilities, so the opening of this new YDC also represents a renewed opportunity for family to support these youth," said Juvenile Justice Commissioner Buckner. "DJJ tries to place juvenile offenders in facilities near their home community whenever possible in hopes it will reduce their risk of recidivism."

The Department of Juvenile Justice spent more than seven-and-a-half million dollars to retrofit the former Department of Corrections adult work-release center that originally stood on this same site more than twenty years. The choice to go with renovation, rather than new construction, represents a substantial savings to taxpayers and will help ease population pressures at DJJ's other juvenile detention centers around the state.

"To help us cope with the current backlog to place our youth in proper facilities, the Governor included special funding in his recent budget to help speed-up the scheduled opening of this new DJJ campus for April 2012," said DJJ Commissioner Buckner. "Seeing the increased statewide need for juvenile offender resources like this one, the Georgia General Assembly followed Governor Deal's recommendation to open the facility in an expeditious manner," said the Commissioner. The opening of the new facility brings 140 new jobs to South Fulton County.

The YDC project was a very public process. In keeping with building code and enforcement, public announcements were made before construction commenced and again as the two-year renovation project reached completion. Now Atlanta YDC is a re-designed and safety-upgraded juvenile detention facility with protective protocols that include high levels of staff monitoring, redundant double-strand razor-wire fence lines, new closed-circuit camera systems and control room, and other state-of-the-art measures.

"This new Atlanta Youth Development Campus is a DJJ blueprint for reducing community concerns about neighborhood security," said Commissioner Buckner. "Our Safety and Security Taskforce reviewed the security measure upgrades as renovation progressed and the facility was totally transformed into a '24-7' secure-campus for Georgia's troubled youth," said the Commissioner.

Juvenile residents at the Atlanta YDC are never allowed to leave the campus unescorted for any reason unless they are transferred or released by the court. An accredited school on premises offers the all-male population a basic curriculum of vocational classes and learning programs. Residents also receive a variety of victim awareness and behavior modification classes, family counseling and transition services, and therapy programs to help develop coping skills for every-day life challenges.

"While offenders are here, they will be held accountable for their actions," said Commissioner Buckner. "When they are released from this facility they will be much more successful transitioning back into their community. The Department is proud of its newest campus and what it adds to DJJ's statewide capacity for rehabilitating juvenile offenders into productive law-abiding citizens."

(END RELEASE)

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