

L. Gale Buckner, Commissioner  
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Office of Communications



## DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

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## Announcement of Personnel Actions at the Augusta YDC

(AUGUSTA) Today the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice announced more personnel actions in the ongoing DJJ investigations at the YDC facility in Augusta. Included in these personnel actions were the terminations of two DJJ Augusta facility staff members and the suspensions of two others with pay.

Each of the actions was the result of separate incidents of policy violations discovered during joint investigations conducted by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation with DJJ Investigations. DJJ Commissioner L. Gale Buckner announced the terminations of the Augusta YDC Recreation Director and a Juvenile Corrections Officer. Commissioner Buckner also announced the suspensions of a Juvenile Corrections Officer and a YDC Counselor.

Commissioner Buckner said, "During the course of these joint and separate investigations, violations of DJJ policies and procedures became apparent which compromised the safety and security of the institution and compromised the ability of these staff members to objectively and effectively supervise youth."

- In detail, Juvenile Corrections Officer (JCO) Edward Henderson was terminated for a misconduct policy violation involving a resident under the care and custody of the Department.
- In a separate investigation, Augusta YDC Recreation Director Charles McGruder was terminated for a sexual misconduct policy violation involving a resident under the care and custody of the Department.
- Augusta YDC Juvenile Corrections Officer (JCO) Steven Whitaker was suspended with pay following an investigation into policy violations regarding contraband.
- In a separate investigation, Counselor 3 LaTonya Durden was also suspended with pay following an investigation into policy violations regarding contraband at Augusta YDC.

All individuals remain under investigation. Those investigations are active and ongoing. Further details of the incidents are being withheld pending the conclusion of these investigations by the DJJ Office of Investigations and the GBI.

- The two terminations and two suspensions are in addition to any previously announced personnel actions taken by the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice at the Augusta facility in 2011.
- No connections have been established between these individuals and the November 2011 death- investigation at the Augusta YDC.

During a recent inspection visit to the Augusta YDC facility, DJJ Commissioner Buckner stated she wanted to send a message to all Augusta facility employees and all DJJ employees statewide, as well as the general public: "I will not tolerate violations of policy and procedures, particularly those that support the safety and security of our institution." Commissioner Buckner indicated today's terminations and suspensions continue to fulfill the agency's pledge to show the public that DJJ takes its mission seriously.

(END RELEASE)