

To: Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission  
 From: Darren Bryant, Team Leader  
 Date: January 25, 2011  
 Re: On-Site Assessment Report  
 HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE DETENTION BUREAU  
 338 S. Orange Street  
 Sebring, Florida 33870  
 Standards Manual Edition: 3.0

**A. Dates of On-Site Assessment:** November 30, 2010 through December 2, 2010

**B. Assessment Team:**

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**C. Standards Summary Tally:**

M = Mandatory N = Non-Mandatory									
	Total Number of Standards	Number of Standards Not Applicable (By Function)	Number of Standards Waived	Number of Non-Waived, Applicable Standards	Number of Standards Elected for 10% Exemption	Percent of Applicable Standards Elected (10% max.)	Percent of Applicable Standards Not Elected (90% min.)	Number of Applicable Non-Elected Standards In Compliance	Percent of Applicable Non-Elected Standards In Compliance
M	106	5	0	101	0	0.00%	100.00%	101	100.00 %
N	141	2	0	139	0	0.00%	100.00%	139	100.00 %

## **D. Agency/ Facility Information:**

### **D-1. Agency/Facility Profile:**

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office was created by legislative act in 1921 and is located in the south central part of Florida. There are 1,028 square miles within the jurisdictional limits of the county where the Sheriff's Office is responsible for maintaining public safety. There are over 1,200 miles of roadway that the county maintains and Sheriff's Office patrols on a daily basis. The Highlands County Sheriff's Office is divided into three bureaus: Law Enforcement, commanded by a Major; Detention, commanded by a Major; and Administration, commanded by a Chief of Staff. The Sheriff's staff consists of the General Counsel, Office of Internal Affairs, the Property and Evidence Unit, and her Executive Assistant, all of which report directly to the Sheriff. There are three incorporated municipalities in Highlands County: Avon Park, Sebring, and Lake Placid. Each city is governed by an elected Mayor and City Council. The Highlands County Sheriff's Office is the chief law enforcement agency for the county with each of the three municipalities having their own police department.

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office Detention facility is housed and located on a single location in downtown Sebring. It is an integral part of the Sheriff's main office and houses 504 inmates. The original jail was built on the corner of Fernleaf Drive and Eucalyptus Drive in 1924, and it housed 32 inmates. In 1957, a new jail was constructed to house 82 inmates and expanded its employment to a total of 10 employees to include deputy sheriffs, detention deputies, and dispatchers. Continued growth of the county required yet another expansion in 1985, adding 60 inmate beds to provide a total capacity of 142 inmates. Overcrowding during the early 1990's required additional inmate housing. In 1997, an addition and renovation of the existing jail increased inmate capacity to 288. In 2004, another new addition increased inmate capacity to 504. The new detention facility addition was necessary to alleviate overcrowding and was part of a 10.4 million dollar project that included expansion of the courthouse. This addition included two 72 bed direct supervision pods where a single detention deputy is in the pod with up to 72 inmates. The Highland's County Sheriff's Office 2010/2011 total operating budget for the Detention Bureau is \$8,884,868.00 with a reserve contingency of \$45,000.00.

### **D-2. Key Personnel:**

Chief Executive Officer: Sheriff Susan Benton  
Jail Administrator: Major David Paepflow  
Facility Administrators: Captain Bobby Green and Captain Booker Johnson  
Accreditation Manager: Ms. Kim Ketchner

## **E. On-Site Assessment Summary:**

The assessment team arrived in Highlands County on Monday, November 29, 2010. A briefing was arranged at the hotel with two other assessors to review the materials provided and discuss the assignments.

On Tuesday, November 30, 2010, Accreditation Manager Kim Ketchner arrived at the hotel at approximately 0800 hours and provided transportation to the facility. The team attended an entrance meeting at approximately 0830 hours with Sheriff Susan Benton and the following key staff members:

Major David Paeplov  
Major Mark Schrader  
Chief of Staff Lisa Burley  
General Counsel Mike Durham  
Captain Bobby Green  
Captain Booker Johnson  
Nursing Administrator Linda Travers  
Captain Jeff Barfield  
Human Resource Administrator Kathy Fluharty  
Business Administrator Merideth Wohl  
Information Services Administrator Rob Jordan  
Detention Deputy Elizabeth Hamilton  
Detention Deputy Heather Mills  
Accreditation Manager Kim Ketchner

The assessment team performed the necessary introductions and provided information related to the accreditation process. The team explained the intent of the assessment was to determine proof of compliance through interviews and inspections throughout the facility in addition to the file review. Sheriff Benton expressed her desire to achieve initial accreditation status from the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission.

The team conducted a walk through tour of the facility, escorted by key personnel. Areas visited included the detention center, inmate housing, control rooms, medical, inmate library, booking intake, laundry, and kitchen areas. Numerous staff and inmate interviews were conducted during this time. Afterwards, the team met in the designated work area and began reviewing files. The team broke for lunch at 1330 hours and returned to complete the file review. At 1830 hours the team attended the evening shift briefing and spoke with staff. In attendance were:

Lieutenant Gilliam  
Sergeant Abeln  
Sergeant Svendsen  
Detention Support Officer Wehrman  
Detention Deputy Clark  
Detention Deputy Soto  
Detention Deputy Lammie  
Detention Deputy Camp  
Detention Deputy Sweet  
Detention Deputy Carnes  
Detention Support Officer Tilley

Detention Deputy Worth  
Detention Deputy Waldon

The team conducted brief introductions and explained the importance of their involvement in the process and expressed an appreciation for their hard work towards receiving their initial accreditation. The team departed the facility at 1910 hours.

On Wednesday, December 1, 2010, the assessment team arrived at the Highlands County Sheriff's Office at 0830 hours to continue the assessment. At 1230 hours the team broke for lunch and returned by 1330 hours. The remaining afternoon was spent conducting staff/inmate interviews and visiting various departments for observations. The team departed the facility approximately 1730 hours.

**Staff interviews:**

Detention Deputy C. Douberly - Inmate property/ inmate identification  
Detention Support Officer J. Keefe - Inmate counts/ key control/ control room duties  
Sergeant J. Murphy - Intake procedures/ release procedures/ safety and security/ legal mail  
Captain B. Green - Intake procedures/ juveniles/ weekly inspections/ tool inventory  
Detention Deputy D. Bennett - Mail/ legal mail/ commissary items  
Sergeant C. Dischert - PREA/ legal mail/ mail/ emergency evacuation/ cutlery/employee training/ commissary items/ hygiene items  
Lieutenant K. Pendarvis - Classification/ inmate programs/ disciplinary hearing/ PREA/ cutlery  
Detention Deputy H. Mills - Food service operations/ PREA/ disciplinary procedures  
Detention Deputy E. Hamilton - Recreation/ inmate uniforms/ chemical storage/ maintenance  
Business Administrator M. Wohl - Fiscal/ personnel files  
Human Resource Administrator Kathy Fluharty - Personnel files/ employee training  
Human Resource Specialist Crystal Moore - Personnel files/ employee training/ benefits  
Detention Deputy E. Simpson - Control duties/ inmate programs  
Captain B. Johnson - Key control/ tool control/ chemical storage/ safety and security  
Detention Deputy T. Saraceni - Inmate counts/ juvenile housing/ sanitation/ inmate uniforms  
Detention Deputy V. Pope - Inmate identification/ recreation/ chemical storage  
Detention Deputy D. Gossard - Inmate workers/ visitation/ food service  
Detention Deputy V. Ferrante - Security inspections/ inmate identification  
Detention Deputy M. Broskey - Inmate property/ barbers  
Clerk C. Garcia - Hygiene items/ commissary  
Drug Program Art Harriman - Inmate drug programs/ education  
Nursing Administrator L. Travers - Medical licensing/ sharps/ medications/ sick call  
Accreditation/Training Specialist C. McCullough - Employee training

**Inmate Interviews:**

Cody Spiegel - Juvenile housing/ programs/ medical/ meals/ commissary/ hygiene  
Laqwan Arrington - Housing/ clothing/ bedding/ programs/ mail/ hygiene items  
Devontie Betts - Library/ indigent commissary/ hygiene/ telephone/ medical  
Joshua Jones - Medical/ mail/ programs/ housing/ recreation/ meal/ commissary

Denise Nelson - Female programs/ hygiene/ visitation/ clothing/ legal mail/ medical  
Kathleen Foley - Cleaning supplies/ hygiene/ telephone usage/ first appearance/ medical  
Lynn Barfield - Inmate handbook/ PREA/ sick call request forms/ medications  
Limardo Torres - Programs/ meals/ mail/ inmate handbook/ first appearance/ medical  
Tammy Cranfield - Programs/ legal mail/ recreation/ hygiene/ clothing/ commissary  
Kenneth Horn - Showers/ visitation/ library/ legal material/ inmate handbook/ PREA  
Frank Finnikin - Recreation/ programs/ clothing/ cleaning supplies/ commissary  
Johnny Malone - Inmate handbook/ clothing/ bedding/ medical/ visitation  
James Meredith - Bedding/ clothing/ inmate handbook/ meals/ mail/ telephones  
Christopher Rowe - Inmate work programs/ religious programs/ medical/ mail  
Tommy Callahan - Inmate work programs/ clothing/ hygiene/ recreation

On Thursday, December 2, 2010, the team returned to the facility at approximately 0900 hours. An exit interview and the teams' oral report were conducted at 0930 hours. The following were in attendance:

Sheriff Susan Benton  
Major David Paepflow  
Major Mark Schrader  
Chief of Staff Lisa Burley  
General Counsel Mike Durham  
Captain Bobby Green  
Captain Booker Johnson  
Nursing Administrator Linda Travers  
Captain Jeff Barfield  
Business Administrator Meredith Wohl  
Information Services Administrator Rob Jordan  
Detention Deputy Elizabeth Hamilton  
Detention Deputy Heather Mills  
Accreditation/Training Specialist Carol McCullough  
Accreditation Manager Kim Ketchner  
Human Resource Specialist Crystal Moore  
Lieutenant Mike Gilliam  
Behavioral Health Coordinator Dorothy Reed

The team explained the initial corrections accreditation process and presented individual comments of the assessment. The team expressed their gratitude to the agency for their professionalism and courtesy displayed by Highlands County Sheriff's Office.

**F. Standards Noncompliance Discussion: None.**

**G. Corrective Action Discussion: None.**

**H. 10-Percent Standards Election (See Section C. for "Tally")  
Standards Elected for Exemption: None.**

**I. Standards, the Status of Which, Were Changed by Assessors: None**

**J. Standards Verified by the Team as "Not Applicable" to the Agency:**

2.05 M (Assessor: DB)      4.12 M (Assessor: DB)      8.03 M (Assessor: DB)  
8.04 M (Assessor: DB)      9.19 (Assessor: DB)      11.02 (Assessor: DB)  
19.04 M (Assessor: DB)

**K. Public Information Activities:**

**K-1. Correspondence and Media Interest: None.**

**K-2. Follow-up by Assessment Team: None**

**L. Exemplary Policies/Projects/Procedures:**

Jail Alternative to Substance Abuse Treatment Program (JASA):

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office contracts with Tri-County Human Services Inc., to provide a 12-week, voluntary program for male and female inmates that provides screening, psychosocial assessment, individual counseling, group sessions on a weekly basis, alcohol/drug education on a weekly basis, and case management services. The case management program includes the establishment of after-care plans and incorporates community-based treatment, attendance at AA, NA, and other support group meetings. This program received an award for best practices from the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association (FADAA)

Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Grant Program (RSAT):

Through grant funding, the Highlands County Sheriff's Office contracts with Tri-County Human Services Inc., to provide a treatment program available to two cohorts of 12 participants each for a total of 24 adult males per year. Male inmates participate in the program for at least six and not more than twelve months. Eligible males are those committed to the Detention Facility either in a pretrial status or post adjudication for the requisite time to complete the six month program. Serving as an alternative to court sanctions, the program also accepts inmates sentenced directly from courts. The program includes counseling sessions, alcohol and drug education, urine screening, GED classes, case management and aftercare services. The male inmates participate in a 12-step program and have a post-release treatment plan which incorporates aftercare services. The program utilizes the Therapeutic Community Model with the use of Cognitive Behavior Modification.

Inmate Farm:

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office maintains an inmate farm, operated by inmate workers housed at the Detention Facility. A farm manager provides training and direction to the inmate workers who grow a variety of vegetables that are used in the Detention Facility's menus for the inmates. These vegetables produced at the farm help defray the cost of the meals to the inmates.

Facility Renovation:

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office Facility is undergoing a renovation to upgrade the HVAC and electrical infrastructure that supports both Law Enforcement and Detention operational and communication functions. This project does not provide for space expansion; rather it provides reliable power, necessary server UPS back-up system, adequate air conditioning, alteration of fire egress and a minor ADA facility change.

**M. Quality of Service: No chapter summaries.**

**N. Summary and Recommendation:**

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS: The Highlands County Sheriff's Office commitment to the accreditation process was clearly evident by the condition of their facilities and the cooperation of their staff. The assessment team was impressed with staff knowledge of, dedication to, and preparedness for the assessment.

After reviewing files, interviewing staff and inmates, and observing the daily operations of the facility, the Highlands County Sheriff's Office complied with 100 percent (101 standards) of the applicable mandatory standards and 100 percent (139 standards) of the applicable non-mandatory standards. The assessment team unanimously recommends the Highlands County Sheriff's Office Detention Bureau for initial accreditation at the next scheduled Commission meeting.

**O. Attachments:**

- Current Organizational Chart
- Most Recent FMJS Inspection
- Most Recent Fire/ Safety Inspection
- Most Recent Health/ Sanitation Inspection
- Most Recent Food Services Inspection

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Darren Bryant -- Team Leader**

**To: Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc.**  
**From: Warren (Lanny) Wyatt, Team Leader**  
**Date: May 9, 2011**  
**Re: Full-Compliance On-Site Assessment Report**  
**Highlands County Sheriff's Office**  
**Standards Manual Edition: 4.0**

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**A. Dates of On-Site Assessment:** May 2 through May 4, 2011

Chief Executive Officer: Sheriff Susan Benton  
 Accreditation Manager: Ms. Kim Ketchner  
 Accreditation Team Member(s): Captain Jeff Barfield  
 Accreditation Specialist Carol McCullough

**B. Assessment Team:**

Team Leader: Warren (Lanny) Wyatt (WW)  
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Team Member: Carol Kersey (CK)  
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**C. Standards Summary Tally:**

CFA Compliance Tally

M = Mandatory N = Non-Mandatory		Total Number of Standards	Number of Standards Not Applicable (By Function)	Number of Standards Waived	Number of Non- Waived, Applicable Standards	Number of Standards Elected for 20% Exemption	Percent of Applicable Standards Elected (20% max.)	Percent of Applicable Standards Not Elected (80% min.)	Number of Applicable Non- Elected Standards In Compliance	Percent of Applicable Non- Elected Standards In Compliance
M		152	5	0	147	0	0 %	100 %	147	100 %
N		109	4	0	105	2	1.94 %	98.06 %	103	100 %

**D. Agency Profile:**

Highlands County is located in the south central part of Florida. It is within 100 miles of 85 percent of the major population centers in the state. There are 1,028 square miles within the jurisdictional limits of the county. There are over 1,200 miles of roadway that the county maintains and the Sheriff's Office patrols on a daily basis. There are three incorporated municipalities in Highlands County: Avon Park, Sebring and Lake Placid. Each municipality is governed by an elected mayor and a city or town council. All three municipalities fund and operate their own police departments independent of the Sheriff's Office. The relationship between the Sheriff's Office and the municipal agencies has contributed to the historically low crime rate within Highlands County. Highlands County's current population is approximately 99,215.

The position of Highlands County Sheriff was created by legislative act in 1921. The Sheriff's Office main building is located in the city of Sebring, in the central part of Highlands County. There is a main substation, housing the majority of the law enforcement bureau, located on U.S. Highway 27 in Sebring. Other off-site facilities include a substation in Avon Park, a substation in Lake Placid, and a mechanical maintenance shop, and an aircraft hangar facility in Sebring.

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) is a full-service law enforcement agency providing patrol, investigations, aviation, K-9, traffic, marine unit, special response team, crisis negotiation team, victim advocate, crime scene processing, crime prevention, court services, detention and organized crime/homeland security services. In 2010, HCSO deputies responded to 142,298 calls for service.

The HCSO is divided into three Bureaus: Law Enforcement, commanded by Major Mark Schrader; Detention, commanded by Major David Paepflow; and Administrative, administered by Chief of Staff Lisa Burley. The Sheriff's staff consists of General Counsel, Internal Affairs, Property Evidence Unit, and the Sheriff's Executive Assistant. The Sheriff's Office currently employs 341 full-time and 23 part-time employees.

Sheriff Susan Benton was born and raised in Miami, Florida. She graduated from Monsignor Pace High School and earned a BA degree in Administration of Justice from St. Thomas University and a Master's of Public Administration from Troy State University. She is a Certified Public Manager and has completed the National Sheriffs' Institute Executive Level Management Education and Training course in 2006, and 2007. In her career Sheriff Benton has served as a physical education teacher; Police Officer with Dade County Schools; Administrative Aide, Highlands County Board of County Commissioners; as a Foster Care Counselor and Protective Investigator with the Department of Children and Families; as a HCSO employee: Deputy Sheriff; Sergeant of School Resource Officers; Lieutenant of Administrative Services; and as the Lieutenant of Criminal Investigations. She was elected Sheriff of Highlands County in 2004 and re-elected in 2008. Sheriff Benton was selected for the Miami Dade College Alumni Hall of Fame in 2010; she was appointed as a Commissioner to the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation in 2010; and in 2010 she was appointed by the governor to the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission.

**Future Issues:**

The HCSO current facility is undergoing renovation that includes information technology and consolidated dispatch expansion. The needs of property/evidence and laboratory facilities for crime scene investigation will require new construction. Additionally, the remainder of law enforcement administration and law enforcement services to include patrol, investigations, special operations, and crime analysis will require either extended office leasing, purchase of an existing facility with renovation, or new construction.

Within the next several months, requests for proposals will be prepared and advertised for these projects. Funding has been identified within the County's Capital Financial Strategy.

The total budget for the Sheriff's Office fiscal year 2010-2011 is \$24,413,678 including \$45,000 contingency. The current Law Enforcement budget for the fiscal year 2010-2011 is \$14,451,008 which is approximately \$500,000 less than the previous year. Future concerns are maintaining staffing levels and current patrol allocations.

**E. On-Site Assessment Summary:**

The team arrived at the HCSO Monday, May 2, 2011, between 9:30 am and 10:30 am and began file review. The schedule change was done to accommodate a request by the team leader to conclude the assessment before Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup>.

Sheriff Benton conducted an entrance interview at 1:00 pm at the Sheriff's Office main building. There were approximately 21 command and executive staff members present. All the staff introduced themselves and spoke about their respective assignments. The Sheriff expressed her commitment and the agency's commitment to the accreditation process and gave credit for the agency's success to the employees in the agency.

Captain Jeff Barfield, along with Accreditation Manager Kim Ketchner and Accreditation Specialist Carol McCullough, were in constant contact with the assessment team and were immediately available during the assessment process.

The files were in exemplary shape and as a result file review was completed very quickly and with no issues.

The Sheriff's Office staff reviews policies on a monthly basis. A number of employees stated they participated in these policy review sessions and each employee, whether sworn or civilian, appreciated the opportunity to provide input into any needed policy changes.

Team Leader Wyatt conducted a field inspection of three radio tower sites and each are secure with appropriate fencing, emergency generators with propane fuel supply tanks, and an alarm system. All the inspected tower sites are in compliance.

Team Leader Wyatt participated in a ride-along with Deputy Sheriff Ken Jorgensen. He was a Florida Highway Patrol Trooper before joining the HCSO approximately 1 ½ years ago. Deputy Jorgensen is knowledgeable and up to date on use of force, report writing, the field training program, evaluations, weapons and proficiency testing. When asked about the agency pursuit policy, he pulled a sheet of paper from his visor and said "Here's my cheat sheet. If it isn't on this list, I can't pursue." It was apparent that Deputy Jorgensen was proud of the agency. Later in the evening, Deputy Jorgensen sustained a knee injury in a foot pursuit on some subjects involved in a theft case. He was working the front desk on light duty at the time of the exit interview.

Team Leader Wyatt interviewed front desk personnel Ellie Ramos, Administrative Support Officer, and Deputy Sheriff Kenny Vincent. The HCSO keeps a supply of donated stuffed animals on hand in the lobby to provide children something to play with to help them deal with the stress associated with their visit.

Assessor Kersey spoke with two members of the Central Records Division, Bonnie Gregg and Jenny Edwards, in reference to their procedure on public records request. Both answered all questions pertaining to their division.

Assessor Kersey spoke with Human Resources personnel Tina Swain and Crystal Moore. Ms. Moore was very insightful reference to application procedures.

Assessors Kersey and Wyatt toured the temporary headquarters of the Consolidated Dispatch Center. Telecommunicator II Lowanda Thompson provided a tour of the facility and Telecommunicator I Sonya Johnson provided the assessors with information referencing the SmartCad System. Assessors Kersey and Vachon met with Switchboard Operator Keith Voy, who provided information reference call volume.

The HCSO is currently working out of the agency back-up communications facility while the main center is being renovated. The assessment team posed the question of what would happen if they needed to abandon the back-up communications center and the on duty communications supervisor was not sure of the answer. As soon as the team returned to the Sheriff's Office, the Dispatch Director Heather Carr identified two back-up consoles in the Sheriff's Office that could function as a third facility if needed and disseminated that information to communications personnel.

Assessor Kersey made contact with personnel from the Training Unit, Carol McCullough and Captain Barfield, and confirmed that all employees received mandatory retraining within the allotted timeframe.

Assessor Kersey met with Warrants Specialist Evelyn Lugo and Supervisor Sheila Roper-Kane from the Warrants Unit and reviewed the confirmation of warrants within FCIC/NCIC rules and regulations and also confirmed that warrants are available 24 hours a day and reviewed the process for removal of active warrants after arrest.

Assessor Kersey was provided a tour of the aviation unit, to include the plane and hangar. Pilot Bob Curry provided an aerial tour of Highlands County.

While the assessment team was at lunch at a restaurant owned by a HCSO detective's wife, Detective Stacy Andrews introduced himself to the team and provided information relating to crime scene training and digital evidence storage.

Team Leader Wyatt spoke with Lieutenant Kenny Johnson of Internal Affairs. Lieutenant Johnson explained how a typical complaint process would be conducted. He brought out the complaint logs for 2010 and 2011 which contained all completed employee internal affairs investigations for those years. He confirmed the agency accepts all complaints and investigates each complaint as needed.

Team Leader Wyatt spoke with K-9 Unit Supervisor Sergeant David Stewart who was conducting training with two Avon Park Correctional Institution K-9 handlers. Both Avon Park handlers spoke glowingly about the relationship with the Sheriff's Office.

Team Leader Wyatt spoke with Chief of Staff Lisa Burley. Ms. Burley is in charge of all of the civilians working the business end of the Sheriff's Office operations. She spoke highly of the value of accreditation and the positive impact accreditation has had. Of particular importance was the fact that she had input towards all policy review that took place in the agency. She also said that accreditation had served to standardize the way the Sheriff's Office operates.

Assessor Vachon interviewed K-9 Deputy Ritenour, K-9 Deputy Fort and Deputy Lister while participating in a ride-along with Deputy Morales on Bravo squad (night shift). All deputies interviewed are familiar with Sheriff's Office policies regarding vehicle pursuits, domestic violence procedures, and evidence handling. All deputies indicated that should they have a question regarding departmental policy

that they could easily access the policy manual via the Power DMS system; Deputy Morales demonstrated access to the online policy manual via his in-car laptop computer. Assessor Vachon observed the vehicle equipment on several marked vehicles to be in working order including emergency lights and audible siren. While participating in the ride along, Assessor Vachon observed the deputies interacting with members of the public and each other. They interacted in a professional manner with members of the public and worked very well as a team while responding to a call of fleeing suspects.

Assessor Vachon observed several marked HCSO vehicles. All vehicles had the requisite equipment including fire extinguisher, emergency lights, audible siren, flashlight, and personal protective gear.

Assessor Vachon toured the Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU) located at 7177 S. George Blvd. in Sebring. The office area was neat, tidy and well organized. There were no detectives in the facility at the time of the tour as they were all out in the field conducting investigations. Assessor Vachon met with Lieutenant Darin Hood who supervises the Criminal Investigations Unit. Lieutenant Hood indicated that no original records are kept on site and that all original documents are copied and sent to Central Records to be scanned. Lieutenant Hood further indicated that working copies of records are shredded once no longer needed by the individual detectives. The facility is only accessible to personnel with key fobs programmed to access the facility. Assessor Vachon interviewed Detective Amanda Dettman. Detective Dettman indicated that she had transferred into investigations approximately seven months prior. She indicated that she destroys working copies of case files once the original documents have been scanned and sent to Central Records and the working copy is no longer needed. She further indicated that as she drives an unmarked Sheriff's Office vehicle she is not permitted to pursue a vehicle unless ordered to do so by a supervisor under unusual circumstances. Both Lieutenant Hood and Detective Dettman are very professional in their appearance and demeanor; they are excellent representatives of the HCSO.

While on site, Assessor Vachon toured the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) which is housed in the same building as the Criminal Investigations Unit, but in a separate and secure area. Assessor Vachon interviewed Detective Jared Futch who is a SIU detective. Detective Futch indicated that the files maintained by the SIU were kept in a locked filing cabinet inside a locked closet. Detective Futch did not have access to the locked closet and requested a Captain to open the closet. Captain Randy Labelle arrived at the SIU office and opened the locked closet for review. Assessor Vachon observed the confidential informant files to be kept in a filing cabinet secured with a padlock. Captain Labelle indicated that only he and a Lieutenant had access to the confidential informant files. Assessor Vachon observed a log book indicating each time a detective accessed the confidential informant files.

Detective Futch explained their process for documenting new confidential informants and showed Assessor Vachon the packet that is completed on each prospective informant. Detective Futch is well versed on "Rachel's Law" regarding the safety of informants. Detective Futch also showed Assessor Vachon the paperwork and process for utilizing investigative funds. Assessor Vachon met with Lieutenant Tim Lethbridge of the Special Victims Unit at his office located at the Children's Advocacy Center. Lieutenant Lethbridge advised that the Special Victims Unit is housed in the same facility as the local Department of Children and Families (DCF) investigators which he said led to better relations with DCF. The facility is neat and tidy and is very well suited for conducting investigations involving child victims. Lieutenant Lethbridge showed Assessor Vachon an interview room for suspects and for child victims. Original copies of investigative reports are maintained at Central Records while detectives use working copies. The working copies are destroyed when they are no longer needed for investigation. It is obvious that Lieutenant Lethbridge is proud of his unit.

Assessor Vachon and Team Leader Wyatt interviewed Sergeant Alvin Walters of the Court Security Division and conducted a field inspection of the courthouse holding cells and the courtrooms. Sergeant Walters demonstrated the security measures for entering the courthouse such as magnetometer and hand

held mirror. Sergeant Walters took the assessors on a tour of the facility and pointed out evacuation plans, duress alarms in courtrooms, prisoner detention facilities and general courthouse security.

Sergeant Jamie Casey gave Assessor Vachon a tour of the property evidence unit and described practices for submitting, cataloging and storing evidence. Assessor Vachon observed refrigerators for perishable evidence both in the storage area and in the packaging area. Four random samples of evidence were checked for proper packaging and paperwork, with no discrepancies noted. Extra security was provided for exceptional, valuable and sensitive items such as narcotics, firearms, large sums of money and homicide evidence. Large sums of money are kept in a safe located behind two locked doors. Sergeant Casey is very professional and demonstrated an enthusiasm for the evidence division. The facility is secure to include several surveillance cameras recording audio and video.

Sergeant Casey demonstrated the HCSO practice for improperly packaged evidence. The improperly packaged evidence is not accepted into inventory but is instead locked in a "trouble locker." An e-mail is sent to the deputy who submitted the evidence which is copied to the deputy's supervisor and Sergeant Casey. The improperly packaged evidence is only accessible to the submitting deputy's Lieutenant to be repackaged by the submitting deputy. The property receipt reflects that the evidence was repackaged. Assessor Vachon observed a property receipt reflecting that the evidence had been repackaged. The Property Evidence Unit is a significant strength for the HCSO.

Assessor Vachon met with Crime Scene Detective Stacey Andrews at the Crime Scene Unit offices located at 7177 S. George Blvd. Detective Andrews showed Assessor Vachon the equipment for preserving digital evidence and described training received by the Crime Scene Unit. Detective Andrews' assigned vehicle, a marked HCSO vehicle, has numerous pieces of equipment utilized for processing crime scenes as well as emergency equipment such as flashing lights and siren, fire extinguisher, etc.

Team Leader Wyatt spoke with Deputy Joe Noto, the agency armorer, about weapons inspections and how the inspections are documented. Deputy Noto located all requested inspection information easily and quickly.

Team Leader Wyatt verified weapons training records through an interview and inspection of training file documentation with Accreditation Specialist Carol McCullough.

All interviews and field inspections were conducted very professionally with the full cooperation and participation of HCSO personnel. There were no accreditation issues identified in any field inspection or interview.

The assessment team participated in an exit interview with Sheriff Benton at 1:00 pm on Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at the Sheriff's Office main building. In addition to the Sheriff and the accreditation team, there were approximately 20 command and executive staff members present. Each assessment team member spoke about their chapter reviews, interviews and field inspections. Each assessment team member expressed the complete commitment to the agency and the accreditation process they encountered from all members of the agency and the fact that the agency personnel were well prepared for this assessment.

The team concluded with a recommendation that the HCSO be reviewed for reaccreditation at the next full Commission meeting.

**F. Standards Noncompliance Discussion: None.**

**G. Corrective Action Discussion:**

31.08 (Assigned Assessor: JV)

A directive provides procedures for the control of electronic and manual keys to the courthouse and courtrooms.

During the inspection of the courthouse one compliance issue was noted regarding key control. A key box was located in a control room located in a holding area. The key box contained several keys and a list of keys in the box but no system for tracking keys in and out of the box. The issue was brought to the attention of the Accreditation Manager later in the day who advised that a change in procedure had already been put into place involving a sign in/out log for the key box in the courthouse. Special Order SO1105.01 was issued to reflect the new practice.

**H. Waiver Concurrence/Nonconcurrence Discussion and Recommendation: None.**

**I. 20 Percent Standards Election (See Section C. for "Tally")**

**Standards Elected for Exemption:**

17.02

17.12

**J. Standards Verified by the Team as "Not Applicable" to the Agency:**

5.03 (CK)	5.05 M (CK)	13.11 (CK)	24.06 (JV)
31.04 (JV)	36.09M (JV)	39.01M (CK)	39.02M (CK)
39.03M (CK)			

**K. Standards, the Status of Which, Were Changed by Assessors: None.**

**L. Public Information Activities: None.**

**L-1. Public Information Session: None.**

**L-2. Telephone Contacts Session: None.**

**L-3. Correspondence and Media Interest: None.**

**L-4. Follow-up by Assessment Team: None.**

**M. Exemplary Policies/Projects/Procedures:**

**Teen Driver Challenge**

Sheriff Susan Benton recognized the need to provide Highlands County's upcoming teenage drivers with specialized training on the hazards of operating a motor vehicle. To accomplish this important goal, the HCSO decided to implement the Florida Sheriff's Association's (FSA) Teen Driver Challenge (TDC) program. The TDC program model was developed through the FSA and implemented statewide during 2007.

The TDC is a voluntary student enrollment program. It provides high school students with hands on driving experience, enhances driving skills, educates them on the dangers of vehicular crashes, and

driving while impaired. The TDC program provides Sheriff's Offices with a new proactive tool allowing us to educate high school student drivers during their developmental stages.

Due to stringent requirements, lengthy preparations to implement the TDC in Highlands County began early 2009 when the TDC program became one of the organizational objectives incorporated into their Strategic Plan. The HCSO is one of the 32 out of 67 Florida Sheriff's Offices currently participating in the TDC program.

In order to teach the TDC program, law enforcement driving instructors must be certified by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the TDC program, and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV). During 2010, two of their Training Unit members completed the mandatory certifications, becoming certified TDC Train the Trainer Instructors.

The pilot TDC class was held during December 2010 at their driver training facility in Sebring. To date in Highlands County, 17 students have successfully completed the two day program. Graduating students receive a certificate of completion and a FSA/TDC tee shirt. The Sheriff's Office plans to continue this important community service with additional TDC classes planned through 2012.

### **Operation Medicine Cabinet**

Operation Medicine Cabinet (OMC) is a law enforcement supervised, prescription drug take back and disposal program. The HCSO serves as the lead agency in their county by organizing each of the bi-annual OMC events. Each OMC event is held in cooperation with the three city police departments within their jurisdiction, and the Drug Free Highlands Coalition (DFH). During an OMC event, the HCSO and the three police departments operate their own independent collection sites. Currently one of the bi-annual OMC events is held with the operational support and advertising of the Drug Enforcement Administration. (DEA)

OMC events benefit the community by promoting public awareness that unused, unwanted prescription medications in the family home can potentially lead to abuse. The OMC program educates the community on the proper disposal of prescription drugs and the potential environmental impact if disposed of improperly. Each OMC event reduces the risk of unwanted pharmaceuticals ending up in the hands of the youths by removing the drugs from circulation.

During 2010 and 2011 to date, two separate OMC events were conducted and organized by the Sheriff's Office in Highlands County. The combined multi-agency effort resulted in a total of 1750.50 pounds of unwanted prescription drugs being removed from circulation. The Sheriff's Office will be coordinating an additional OMC event during September of 2011. Their efforts will continue to educate the citizens and promote a proactive based philosophy regarding proper disposal of unwanted prescription drugs.

### **Special Victims Unit/CAC**

The HCSO Special Victims Unit (SVU) is comprised of two victim advocates, two deputies, three detectives, a lieutenant, and a unit secretary. However, it is more than the composition of the unit that makes the Special Victims Unit exceptional. The SVU is housed in the Champion for Children Advocacy Center of Highlands County. From this location, the SVU works collaboratively with other agencies based in the same building: the Department of Children and Families, Guardian Ad Litem, the Child Protection Team, as well as mental health and substance abuse agencies.

The HCSO has a memorandum of understanding which specifies all investigations of abuse or neglect of a child, elder, and disabled person will be investigated jointly by the Sheriff's Office and the Department

of Children and Families. Investigators from each agency work only a few feet from each other. DCF investigators accompany deputies and detectives during the investigation of each abuse or neglect allegation and the two work together throughout the entire investigation. By having both investigative and service agencies housed together, victims and their families receive faster and more efficient services. The interagency trust and communication that has been built following this model contributes to successful investigations.

### Strategic Planning

As Highlands County lead law enforcement agency, the Sheriff's Office is charged with public safety responsibility, court security, execution of court orders, and management of persons incarcerated in the county jail.

To meet these and other responsibilities of the Office of Sheriff they recognize that strategic thinking and planning is one of the most critical elements of public management. Its purpose is to establish long-term goals, strategies, quantifiable objectives, and detailed actions that address issues related to performance, productivity, required statutory services, and community and personal well being. This plan affords them the benefit of long range planning, will build on their goals and practices, and will propose modifications for the future to meet the anticipated changes in the community and environment. This process establishes the organization's preferred future, ensures consistency and clarity of purpose throughout the organization, and is intended to provide the foundation for maintaining a collaborative working relationship among the public, citizens, and private sector entities for identifying public safety priorities and needs.

The below diagram shows a continuum that indicates the necessity for continuous feedback, evaluation, and comparison with previous steps. A quarterly assessment process is implemented to assure a successful outcome.



**N. Quality of Law Enforcement Service:** No chapter summaries.

**O. Summary and Recommendation:**

**OVERALL CONCLUSIONS:**

The assessment team found the HCSO to be exceptionally well prepared for this assessment. From the introductory material to interviews with all employees, the assessment team found that all were well prepared and knowledgeable about what to expect. The agency has seen tangible benefits in the areas of technology, innovation and standardization under Sheriff Benton's leadership. She is committed to her vision of creating a safer Highlands County and leads by example.

The Sheriff's Office has benefitted from a comprehensive multi-year Strategic Plan that is detailed, specific and sets lofty goals for the Sheriff's Office. The Highlands County Sheriff Office have regular policy review sessions that include members from all components of the agency, a commitment to individual responsibility and promoting ethical behavior. Of particular significance is the emphasis that the HCSO places on the integrity of property/evidence. This unit reports directly to Sheriff Benton and is audited and inspected rigorously.

A number of Sheriff's Office personnel commented on how accreditation has changed the agency for the better. All mentioned standardization and the opportunity to participate in policy review sessions are significant. Sheriff Benton and her entire staff demonstrated a sincere willingness to comply with the spirit and letter of Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation standards and philosophy.

The assessment team recommends the Highlands County Sheriffs Office be favorably reviewed for reaccreditation at the next full Commission meeting.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Team Leader**

**List of required attachments to accompany submission of the final report:**

- 1.Supporting documentation for noncompliance finding.
- 2.Supporting documentation for corrective action, old and new directive, if applicable, with changes highlighted.
- 3.Supporting documentation for waivers, with original waiver request form signed by Team Leader.
- 4.Public comment telephone log (original, if used).
- 5.Correspondence received (original).
- 6.Onsite media coverage/articles/press releases.
- 7.Documentation for exemplary projects/policies/procedures.
- 8.Proof of CALEA Accreditation (Comparative Compliance only).