

MÉXICO

en el camino hacia un
mejor sistema

(on the road to achieving a better system)

BY FLOYD NELSON

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM ACCREDITATION SPECIALIST ELI MENDOZA

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There is no country on Earth that has shared the prodigious, yet complex history that Mexico has shared with the United States. Even from the depths of the Mexican-American War have come lasting peace. From arch enemies have come dedicated friends. From committed combatants have come staunch allies who not only fought together, but bled and died alongside each other for a common cause. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the United Mexican States and the United States of America have always seemed to rise together and find the best paths forward economically, politically and socially. And it was in this spirit and rising partnership, nine years ago, that ACA began working with the Mexican Penitentiary System in Mexico.

Thanks to ACA's International Initiatives Office and the Department of Standards and Accreditation working with committed partners, Mexico's correctional system continues to be transformed in positive ways.

Located in the southern portion of the North American continent, Mexico is the second largest economy in Latin America. Mexico's population of nearly 130 million originates from Amerindian civilizations, such as Olmec, Toltec, Teotihuacan, Zapotec, Maya and Aztec. Today, the proud and diverse "Mestizo" population have brought Mexico's developing market economy, replete with natural resources, to be a country ranked, according to the International Monetary Fund, "the 15th largest in the world in nominal terms and the 11th largest in the world measured by purchasing power."

As one leading international organization, the World Bank stated, "Mexico is a country with significant opportunities and potential." But with those opportunities and potential, as is often the case, come socioeconomic conditions that readily produce those who need to come under correctional care. For Mexico, that number stands at approximately 200,000, where the penal system consists of both federal and state correctional facilities. Historically, there has long been a need, and a desire, to improve the Mexican correctional system which many considered to be intractable.

But thanks to ACA's International Initiatives Office and the Department of Standards and Accreditation working together with a group of committed partners — the Mexican Penitentiary System, the U.S. State Department, the Embassy and Consulates of the United States of America in Mexico City, and the Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) — Mexico's correctional system continues to be transformed in positive ways.

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Photo courtesy Lovestruck Images

The Mexican Delegation at the ACA 2020 Winter Conference in San Diego.

Photo opposite page: istock/Vincent_St_Thomas

Cambio y progreso (change and progress)

ACA's Performance-Based Standards and Expected Practices, which the organization created and refines continuously, represents fundamental correctional practices that ensure staff and inmate safety and security; enhance staff morale; improve record maintenance and data management capabilities; assist in protecting the agency against litigation;



and improve the function of the facility or agency at all levels. ACA, through its Department of Standards and Accreditation, carries out the development and monitoring of its Performance-Based Standards and Expected Practices along with the facilitation of the ACA accreditation process (formalized by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections), creates training and community resources to help facilities, auditors and administrators access and implement leading correctional practices within their agencies.

Through the strengthening of the National Conference of the Penitentiary System, a new law that regulates the

States in México Accredited by ACA



operation of the Penitentiary System and the beginning of the accreditation process in the prisons of Mexico, Mexico is certainly not where it used to be and where it is going is clear — a country and a system that fully embraces all that ACA has to offer.

For the accredited facilities, it has meant a very important change to be able to work with expected practices, policies and procedures, giving certainty to the operation and administration of the facilities, as well as to protect the life and health of prison staff and inmates.

Other Mexican agencies, such as the National Commission of Human Rights, have recognized the progress

of the facilities accredited through ACA.

To date:

- 98 facilities have been accredited (adult prisons, juvenile detention centers, central offices, and training academy).
- 172 audits have been carried out in Mexico.
- 18 states out of the 32 of Mexico, have at least one accredited facility.
- The state of Guanajuato has the Global Eagle Award.
- Agencies from other countries have visited accredited facilities to learn about their experiences and results with accreditation.

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Federal Facilities in México Accredited by ACA



■ INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATIONS

Since 2011, in coordination with the Mexican Penitentiary System, ACA has sought “continuous improvement,” embarking “full speed ahead” with the accreditation process through training and conferences whenever and wherever possible. To ACA, Mexico is more than one of our many international member countries — Mexico is a partner and a friend. In fact, a regular occurrence at the ACA Winter Conference and the ACA Congress of Correction is the singing, in Spanish, of “El Himno Nacional Mexicano” – the National Anthem of Mexico.

Hiring an accreditation specialist for Mexico, creating a new, exclusive manual for Mexico, and implementing training for new Mexican auditors are just

some of the initiatives supporting our ongoing work in Mexico. Even with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic taking its toll and affecting everything and everyone, ACA is continuing its undaunted path and its commitment to make sure Mexico continues to be *en el camino hacia un mejor sistema* — on the road to achieving a better system.

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Some of the Mexican facilities accredited at the ACA 2020 Winter Conference in San Diego



Acambaro



Adolescentes Queretaro



Adolescentes GTO



Cereso Estatal No. 2 Chihuahua

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