



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

ADMINISTRATION

3200 East Highway 34
c/o 500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501-5070
Phone: (605) 773-3478
Fax: (605) 773-3194

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Contact: Michael Winder
(605) 773-3478

West Farm Program Changing Hands

(Pierre) - The West Farm, a juvenile transitional care facility near Sioux Falls, is changing hands, but not its mission.

Volunteers of America, Dakotas, a nonprofit organization based in Sioux Falls, has agreed to operate the program through a contract with the state of South Dakota. Volunteers of America, Sioux Falls, and Turning Point merged in November 2000 to form Volunteers of America, Dakotas.

"Volunteers of America and its predecessor, Turning Point, have done a wonderful job providing community based programming in the Sioux Falls area," says Secretary of Corrections Jeff Bloomberg. "This contract will provide an opportunity to integrate youth in corrections programs into their programs."

The West Farm is a facility for youth who have completed correctional placement and are transitioning back into the community to work, post-secondary education, independent living or the military.

Volunteers of America, Dakotas will operate the program as a Title XIX (Medicaid) Group Care Center. Licensure will allow for the accessing of federal funding. This will substantially reduce the state's cost for each juvenile in the program.

All current employees will be retained by Volunteers of America, Dakotas. The buildings at the West Farm will remain state property, with the state responsible for maintenance.

The West Farm, located approximately seven miles west of Sioux Falls, was originally a working farm for the South Dakota State Penitentiary. The prison farming operation ceased in 1997. The state converted the buildings into a juvenile transitional care facility that opened in 1998.