



October 3, 2025

Mariano Barvie, Esq.
Attorney, Harrison County Sheriff's Office
2701 24th Avenue
Gulfport, Mississippi 39501-4941

Re: Use of Inmate Canteen Funds for Vocational Education Programs

Dear Mr. Barvie:

The Office of the Attorney General has received your request for an official opinion.

Background

According to your request, the Harrison County Jail operates vocational education programs for inmates, including instruction in HVAC, construction, vehicle repair, and electrical work. These programs are aimed at providing inmates with valuable vocational skills that could assist in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Questions Presented

1. May funds generated from an inmate canteen fund at the Harrison County Jail be used to purchase materials for educational programs that consist of vocational classes such as HVAC, construction, vehicle repairs, and electrical?
2. For example, may construction materials and vehicle parts be purchased to assist inmates in the construction and auto repair classes?

Brief Response

1. In MS AG Op., *Adam* at *1 (Feb. 15, 2019), this office stated that so long as the desired expenditure "was found to be an educational-related expense, inmate canteen funds could be used." This is a factual determination to be made by the sheriff.

2. Please see response to question one.

Applicable Law and Discussion

Mississippi Code Annotated Section 19-3-81(1)(b) provides in part,

[A]ny funds which may be derived from the operation of an inmate canteen facility or facilities shall be deposited into a special fund in the county treasury to be designated as the “Inmate Canteen Fund.” Any monies in the special fund may be expended solely by the sheriff of the county for *any educational related expenses*, to purchase equipment and supplies and to provide for maintenance of the equipment purchased for the benefit and welfare of the inmates incarcerated in the county jail. The term “supplies” shall not include supplies related to the personal hygiene of inmates.

(emphasis added). In MS AG Op., *Adam* at *1, this office stated that so long as the desired expenditure “was found to be an educational-related expense, inmate canteen funds could be used.” *See also* MS AG Op., *Shepard* at *1 (June 8, 2018) (same); MS AG Op., *Shepard* at *1 (July 7, 2017) (same). Whether an expenditure is “an education-related expense is a factual question to be determined by the [s]heriff in his sound discretion.” MS AG Op., *Shepard* at *1 (June 8, 2018) (citing MS AG Op., *Davis* at *2 (Mar. 22, 2002)).

If this office may be of any further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

LYNN FITCH, ATTORNEY GENERAL

By: /s/ *Maggie Kate Bobo*

Maggie Kate Bobo
Special Assistant Attorney General