



PRESS RELEASE

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Probation and Parole Officers Improve Effectiveness of Supervision

Mississippi Department of Corrections probation and parole officers J.J. Statham and James Johnson take pride in their jobs. In fact, these two officers are so concerned about the effectiveness of their jobs that they helped re-organize the structure of the Hattiesburg Probation and Parole Office.

Because the inmate population has changed in the last 10 to 20 years, probation and parole officers are faced with different kinds of challenges. For instance, it is common now to have an inmate on probation or parole with 3 to 4 convictions; in the past, inmates were truly first time offenders. With this changing type of inmate, changes are being made to fit the situation. In this particular area of MDOC's southern territory, things are now being done a little differently. Since June 1, 2000, the focus of the probation and parole office in Hattiesburg is based on workloads and not caseloads. What does this mean to an average citizen? Officers have more time to focus on the inmates they're assigned to with the new system.

In the past, probation and parole officers were assigned an equal amount of inmates to supervise. The supervision of these inmates included intensive supervision (house arrest), parolees, probationers and earned released inmates. The probation and parole staff recognized that this wasn't accomplishing their mission. Some inmates need more supervision than others and this requires more time. So, inmates were divided into categories by their supervision levels. Inmates that were classified as needing "intensive probation/parole" were assigned to two officers. These two officers, Johnson and Statham now are responsible for this select group of inmates.

Officers Johnson and Statham are now able to focus more on the inmates they're responsible for by making more visits to an inmate's home and work, and by being a more visible figure in the community. "By being out in the community, we've got a rapport with the other agencies," Statham said. "Also, people in the community are more likely to give us information due to this visibility." The other caseloads (intensive supervision and regular probation/parole inmates) were divided among the other 6 probation and parole staff employees.

Johnson and Statham feel good about the reorganization. Johnson said, "You hope that you're making a difference and keep them (inmates) from repeating their mistakes. It's (probation & parole) kind of like a balance between law enforcement and social work. We try to help when we can."

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