



PRESS RELEASE

MISS. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS * 723 N. PRESIDENT ST. * JACKSON, MS 39202 * (601) 359-5600 * (FAX: 5738)

Date: July 12, 2001
Contact: Jennifer Griffin
Phone: (601) 359-5721
Fax: (601) 359-5738

Advisory Board Announced for Division of Victim Services at Mississippi Department of Corrections

Jackson—Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) Commissioner Robert L. Johnson today announced the creation of an advisory board for the Division of Victim Services (DVS). The 10 member DVS Advisory Board is composed of crime victims, concerned citizens and representatives from victim advocacy organizations.

The DVS provides victims access to inmate information if the inmate is under the authority of MDOC. The DVS Advisory Board was created to advise and make recommendations on enhancing services to victims and in providing training to MDOC staff. Board members will assist in the development of program policies, procedures and resources.

“I am delighted that these ten individuals have agreed to assist MDOC in strengthening our commitment to providing crime victims a voice in the correctional system,” said Commissioner Johnson. “This board will help MDOC communicate statewide our focus of providing assistance to victims of crime.”

The Division of Victim Services was created in November 2000 through a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant. Many of the services provided to victims are outlined in the Crime Victims’ Bill of Rights, and include:

- Notification within 15 days prior to the end of the sentence of the inmate;
- Notice of release upon expiration of sentence or medical release; and
- Notice within 15 days after the prisoner has died if within MDOC custody.

“I believe it will be an excellent opportunity for board members and me to help guide the Division of Victim Services in balancing the mandate of the law with concerns of victims in a lawful and dignified manner,” said board member Jeff Klingfuss.

(more)

“I feel that it is an honor to be asked to serve on the advisory board,” said board member June Renfrow. “Only with the vision of working together can we help ease the effects of trauma associated with crime in our state better for people we are helping.”

More than 400 individuals have been assisted by the DVS over the last nine months. To receive assistance from DVS, victims must complete and return a notification form to MDOC. To receive a copy of the notification form, victims can call toll free at 1-866-522-4087 or victims can electronically complete and submit a notification form through the MDOC web site, www.mdod.state.ms.us.

“Victims of crime need to know that there is a real commitment on the part of Commissioner Johnson and the members of this advisory board to listen to their concerns and bring their voice to the agency,” said DVS Director Tara Frazier. “I have no doubt that this partnership between MDOC and the DVS Advisory Board will increase the number of crime victims we are able to assist with information that helps provide victims some assurance that their concerns are being heard.”

<30>

MEDIA NOTE: The MDOC has digital photos of the Division of Victim Services Advisory Board. If you are interested in receiving a photo, please call Bill Greenleaf at (601) 359-5646 or e-mail him at Bgreenleaf@mdoc.state.ms.us.