



PRESS RELEASE

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MDOC Successfully Integrating HIV/Aids Positive Inmates into Educational and Vocational Programs

Jackson—The Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) today announced that it has integrated HIV/Aids positive inmates into the educational and vocational programs at the Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) and Central Mississippi Correctional Facility (CMCF). To date more than three dozen HIV/Aids positive inmates are enrolled in the rehabilitation programs.

“The hard work of the HIV/Aids Task Force combined with the professionalism and dedication of MDOC staff has assisted in making this integration process a success,” said Commissioner Robert L. Johnson. “There has not been any adverse impact to staff or inmates as a result of providing HIV/Aids positive inmates access to and placement in educational and vocational programs.”

The MDOC began interviewing and placing HIV/Aids positive inmates into Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs in September 2001. As of November 15, nine students were enrolled at the ABE programs at MSP. In addition, 19 students were enrolled in nine different vocational programs at MSP.

At CMCF, HIV/Aids positive inmates have always participated in ABE and GED classes. There are eight HIV/Aids positive inmates currently enrolled in educational and vocational programs at CMCF.

“This is a long-term, on-going integration process,” said Commissioner Johnson. “There is no deadline on increasing the educational and vocational opportunities provided to HIV/Aids positive inmates or for that matter all inmates. We are continuously looking for opportunities that will allow us to increase the number of students in each class who can participate in these programs.”

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In addition to program placement, MDOC has provided HIV/Bloodborne Pathogens training to more than 3,300 MDOC staff members and more than 5,300 inmates. The HIV/Bloodborne Pathogens training will be added as a standard class in the MDOC staff annual refresher courses beginning January 2002. The HIV/Bloodborne Pathogens training is being conducted as part of the initial classification of newly sentenced inmates on an ongoing basis at the reception and classification center at CMCF.

In January 2001, Commissioner Johnson created an HIV/Aids Task Force composed of 15 members representing health organizations, inmate advocacy organizations and MDOC employees. In March 2001, the task force presented Commissioner Johnson with their report supporting the integration of HIV/Aids positive inmates into educational and vocational programs. Commissioner Johnson adopted the task force's recommendations in April 2001.

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