

For Immediate Release
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Bringing Honor To Victims: Mississippi Commemorates 2002 National Victims' Rights Week

(Jackson, MS) – During the week of April 21-27, 2002 victims of crime, victim advocates and juvenile justice officials, allied professionals, and community volunteers across the state have been observing the 22nd annual National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This week's theme is "Bringing Honor to Victims."

"This week is about bringing honor to all crime victims by promoting a greater understanding of crime victims' needs, by educating victims about their rights and the resources available to them, and by applauding the countless volunteers and professionals who have dedicated their lives to seeing that those harmed by crime don't fall through the cracks," said Governor Ronnie Musgrove.

For several years, victims and their families have worked to bring the concerns' and issues of victims to the forefront of state and the nation's public policy. Today, almost every state and the federal government provide services to victims of crime. In November 1998, Mississippi amended its constitution to provide the highest protection for the rights of crime victims.

The Mississippi Constitution guarantees victims of crime constitutional protection. Victims of crime shall have the right to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect throughout the criminal justice process; to be informed, present and heard, when authorized by law. Many other rights also apply to crime victims.

"We must move the concept of victims' rights and services from being a "privilege" to a fundamental right due to all victims of crime," said Musgrove.

Department of Finance & Administration: Crime Victim Compensation Program

In 1990, the Mississippi Crime Victims' Compensation Act was enacted. The Department of Finance & Administration (DFA) received authority to establish the Crime Victim Compensation Program (CVCP) to help victims by providing financial assistance to cover expenses related to a crime not covered by any other source.

Benefits are awarded for medical care, counseling services, lost wages, and loss of support and funeral costs.

"We know that financial aid doesn't lessen the impact of trauma caused by a violent crime. However, we have found that it plays an important role in the recovery process of a victim," said Gary Anderson, Executive Director of DFA.

In 1999 the CVCP established the Division of Victim Assistance. The DVA provides information, referrals, crisis intervention, personal support, criminal justice and court-related services to crime victims, as well as advocacy for victims' rights. You may contact CVCP to obtain information and/or assistance by the following:

Mississippi Crime Victim Compensation Program

P.O. Box 267

Jackson, MS 39205

Telephone: 601-359-6766

Toll Free: 1-800-829-6766

Fax: 601-359-3262

www.dfa.state.ms.us/cvcomp.html

Department of Corrections: Division of Victim Services

In November 2000, the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) established a Division of Victim Services to provide crime victims access to inmate information if the inmate is under the authority of MDOC. 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.

The DVS will also provide information and referral services to victims. To obtain information from DVS, call toll free at 1-866-522-4087 or visit the website at www.mdcc.state.ms.us.

Department of Public Safety: Office of Justice Programs

The Office of Justice Programs administers federal grant programs funded through the U. S. Department of Justice.

The Victims of Crime Act Program provides funding for programs that deliver direct services to victims of crime such as crisis intervention, emergency services, support services and court-related services.

The Violence Against Women Act Program provides funding for (1) developing and strengthening effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies; and (2) victim services in cases involving violent crimes against women.

“This year’s theme, Bringing Honor to Victims, offers an opportunity for Mississippi to lead the nation in recognizing that no one deserves to be a victim of crime, and that all victims deserve basic rights and services. I urge all Mississippians to use this week to reaffirm our commitment to see that crime victims receive our respect, understanding and help this week and throughout the year.”

Governor Ronnie Musgrove

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