



PRESS RELEASE

Date: February 18, 2010
Contact: Tara Booth

Phone: (601) 359-5701
Fax: (601) 359-5738

MDOC Prison Treatment Programs Cut Recidivism Rate by 5%

Jackson – Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) felons have a better chance of never returning to prison if they participate in prison programs while they are serving time, according to a study conducted by the National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) at Mississippi State University in Starkville. Findings show Mississippi has a 22% lower recidivism rate than the national average.

Released last week, the study is a compilation of yearly prison and post-release statistics from 2005-2009. On average, Mississippi releases from prison approximately 9,000 felons per year. The study concludes that those felons who participate in any form of prison program while incarcerated have a low and almost non-existent recidivism rate. Some of the highlights of the study include:

- The number of released MDOC offenders who participated in counseling, training, and education programs while incarcerated has increased from approximately 1,400 in 2005 to 2,400 in 2009.
- Of those who participated in programs, the number completing the programs went from 3 percent to approximately 25 percent.
- For the Mississippi Department of Corrections, the three-year recidivism rate has declined from 35 percent in 2005 to 30 percent in 2007. Of those offenders returning to prison, 50 percent returned within one year, with the percentage decreasing in the following years. Nationally, the Bureau of Justice Statistics - the statistics arm of the Department of Justice - found high rates of recidivism among released prisoners. Within three years, 52 percent of the released prisoners in a 1994 study were back in prison either because of a new crime or because of a parole violation.
- Those inmates who completed any program had the lowest three-year recidivism rate (approximately 2%). Those who did not complete a program experienced the same recidivism rate (32% and 33%) as those not participating at all.
- Offenders more likely to return to prison are males, those younger than 20 years old, blacks, and those with less than a high school education. The highest recidivism rate is among those reporting that they are single, divorced, separated, or widowed.

<more>

- Approximately 35 percent of released offenders are able to find a job within one quarter of their release, and 60 percent are able to retain their job for three quarters. For those who completed any program, employment retention went up to 67 percent.
- Approximately 45 percent of released inmates are employed in the service industry, and approximately 25 percent in the manufacturing industry, with an average salary of \$17,000 per year.

“The Mississippi Department of Corrections realizes that prison based treatment and educational programs are smart investments preventing future crime and victimization. Prison programs and prison based treatment are proactive strategies that promote public safety by helping inmates transform themselves and successfully transition back into our communities,” said Corrections Commissioner Christopher B. Epps. “The evidence in the research conducted by Director Domenico Parisi and the nSPARC staff corroborates the hard work performed by the personnel and the inmates at the Mississippi Department of Corrections.”

Currently, 21,339 inmates are serving their felony convictions in Mississippi prisons and 32,906 offenders are being supervised under community corrections.

MEDIA NOTE: nSPARC study is attached.

###