



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS



PRESS RELEASE

Date: April 19, 2010
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MDOC Promotes Fairness, Dignity, Respect for Victims of Crime During 2010 National Crime Victims' Rights Week

Jackson – This week, April 18 – 24, the Mississippi Department of Corrections – Division of Victim Services (MDOC-DVS) along with communities throughout the nation will rally to honor and support victims of crime. With the theme, *Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.*, 2010 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) will recall the ideals that inspired the decades-long struggle of the victims' rights movement and challenge all Americans to honor victims' rights.

Over 25 years ago, a grassroots movement began to combat unfairness in the justice system and launched decades of progress for victims of crime. As of 2010, every state has passed victims' rights laws, and 32 states have constitutional victims' rights amendments, including Mississippi. All states have victim compensation funds, and more than 10,000 victim assistance programs exist throughout the country. "In 2008, 21 million crimes were committed in the United States. Five million were violent and 16 million were property crimes," said MDOC Commissioner Chris Epps. "And when victims know and assert their rights—grounded in fairness, dignity, and respect—we advance public safety and our nation's highest ideals. The Mississippi Department of Corrections has had a tradition of putting victims first."

"Right now, every day in every state, some victims are not exercising their rights because they don't know they have them," said Melinda Box Braxton, MDOC-DVS Director. "It's our job to make certain they know their rights as crime victims, and NCVRW is another opportunity to get the word out to our citizens."

Currently, the MDOC-DVS has over 4,700 registered crime victims. There are over 21,000 inmates incarcerated and 33,620 offenders serving on community corrections. The primary function of DVS is to register crime victims regarding notification prior to an inmate's release from incarceration. In addition, the office provides enhanced services including offender status, crisis intervention, information regarding the Crime Victim Compensation Program and Crime Victims' Rights, liaison with law enforcement agencies, field officers, restitution matters, protective orders, harassment by offenders, support and assistance during victim/offender dialogue, meetings with the Parole Board and preparation/escort services during executions.

Additionally, MDOC is implementing a Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) network that allows Mississippi victims to receive real-time information about the custody status of state inmates as well as offenders housed in county jails statewide. From booking to release, victims can register for immediate access to inmate information including notification about an inmate's placement, release, transfer or other change in custody status. Currently, 64 counties are participating in MDOC's SAVIN network.

For additional information about National Crime Victims' Rights Week or your rights as a victim of crime, please contact the Mississippi Department of Corrections – Division of Victim Services at 866.522.4087 or visit the MDOC web site at www.mdoc.state.ms.us. For more information on MDOC's SAVIN network, contact SAVIN Director, Adam Lee, at 601.359.5724.

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