



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Inmate death under investigation at MSP; MDOC improves mental health programs**

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**JACKSON, MS** – Mississippi Department of Corrections investigators are examining circumstances surrounding the weekend death of an inmate at Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

Corrections officials on site said Jamie L. Eaton, 28, was pronounced dead in his cell shortly before midnight Saturday. Sunflower County Coroner Heather Burton ruled Eaton’s death as a suicide, pending official results from an autopsy. Since 2015, Eaton had been transferred 16 times among eight different Mississippi facilities.

According to MDOC records, Eaton, Inmate #187462, was serving four sentences in 13 years, mostly for drug convictions. In Lee County, he was convicted of nonresidential burglary and the sale and possession of methamphetamines, initially being sentenced on July 13, 2015. Eaton was also convicted of possession of a controlled substance on March 12, 2019, in Union County.

Corrections Commissioner Burl Cain said, “We are taking particular interest in this case because mental health programs are among our top priorities in helping inmates. Nobody likes being cut off from their families and that’s what prison is, being cut off from society because a person made bad choices. Our job is to rehabilitate them, to restore and help them so they can function on the outside, and mental health is at the center of helping them.”

After a nationwide search, the state hired VitalCore Health Strategies based in Kansas and with offices in Ridgeland.

VitalCore CEO Viola Riggan said, “For Mississippi Corrections, first, we are immediately hiring more and qualified behavioral health professionals to handle cases and keeping them in continual training. Second, we are repositioning existing services where they are most needed which will give inmates better access when they need help; third, we’re leveraging technology through TeleHealth and University of Mississippi Medical Center to connect prisons with health professionals to save hours of critical travel time. Fourth, with substance abuse widespread among today’s prisoners, we are instituting new and better drug rehabilitation treatment programs attacking both mental and physical addictions. Finally, we are addressing re-entry programs that help inmates stay clean and drug-free.”

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