



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Departments of Corrections and Mental Health Partner to Help Reduce Recidivism**

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JACKSON – Mississippi has been awarded a \$647,461 federal grant aimed at reducing recidivism by addressing untreated co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders in offenders under community supervision.

The Departments of Corrections and Mental Health are partners in administering the Second Chance Act Reentry Program for Adults with Co-Occurring Substance Use and Mental Disorders for 36 months, beginning Saturday, Oct. 1.

“Our state is in dire need of programs that can offer ex-offenders a full continuum of integrated care that will improve their functioning and outcomes when they return to their communities,” Commissioner Marshall Fisher said. “Therefore, when the Department of Mental Health approached me about supporting its efforts to get this grant, I didn’t hesitate.”

Fisher said the grant could not have come at a better time considering the number of incarcerated offenders with mental health and addiction disorders. There are 3,194 inmates receiving ongoing mental health treatment and about 15,000 have self-reported abusing alcohol and drugs.

“We believe individuals with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders represent a group of people who have been under-identified and may have had difficulties accessing the services they need,” DMH Executive Director Diana Mikula said. “The Mississippi Second

Chance Act Reentry Program will work to identify these needs and get people the services that can help them begin their recovery process.”

The grant allows the two departments to do several things, including improve identification of inmates with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders, provide training to staff, integrate individualized treatment plans and track participant outcomes.

The departments will use mental health assessments to determine individuals’ needs and collaborate to develop re-entry plans, including pre- and post-release treatment. Those treatment services will include cognitive-behavioral therapy, crisis intervention, and recovery support services such as housing, vocational, and educational services.

As the program begins, it will focus on non-violent offenders returning to Hinds County. Current plans are to serve 90 individuals during the three-year pilot program in order to develop a program model that can be replicated statewide with the receipt of additional federal grant funding. Unlike similar re-entry models, this program will require people under community supervision to participate in a minimum number of intensive outpatient therapeutic hours, based on their individual recidivism risk level.

“Through our collaboration with the Department of Corrections, we know there are a number of eligible individuals right here in Hinds County,” Mikula said. “We will be collaborating and using existing resources in the state mental health system to get these Mississippians the treatment and support services they need. I know that with all of us working together, we can create a better tomorrow for the people of our state.”

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