



Hope Forward: CMCF's First Behavioral Management Unit Graduates Embrace Change

PEARL – Twelve inmates—the first graduates of the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Recovery Program in the Behavior Management Unit at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility—are now contributing in various job assignments at the prison, illustrating the program's positive impact.

The participants graduated on July 17, marking a celebration of determination, healing, and the willingness to embrace change. Family members, MDOC leadership, mental health professionals, and facility staff who had witnessed the hard work and personal growth that brought them to that day applauded as the graduates received their certificates.

For many of the graduates, the journey had not been easy. It required confronting addiction, addressing mental health challenges, accepting responsibility, and committing to a new way of thinking. Through months of treatment, counseling, and evidence-based programming, the participants developed the skills needed to manage life's challenges better and move forward with hope.

Guest speaker state Rep. Fabian Nelson encouraged graduates to continue building on the progress they had made. He reminded them that recovery is a lifelong journey made one decision at a time. "Each of you made the decision to put in the work, face difficult challenges, and choose a different path," Nelson said. "Be proud of what you've accomplished today, but remember that this graduation is only the beginning. Continue building on what you've learned and never lose sight of the future you're capable of creating."

The Behavioral Management Unit provides a structured therapeutic environment for individuals diagnosed with mental illness, substance use disorders, or co-occurring conditions. Participants receive individualized psychiatric care while engaging in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), trauma-informed care, relapse prevention, psychotherapy, and life skills development.

Building on the success of its inaugural graduating class, the BMU currently serves approximately 48 participants.

As the first graduating class, the 12 participants have established the foundation for a program that will continue to change lives for years to come. Their success reflects the Mississippi Department of Corrections' commitment to rehabilitation by addressing the underlying challenges that contribute to incarceration and providing opportunities for lasting personal growth.

"I couldn't be more proud of these graduates," said CMCF Superintendent Matt Reynolds at the graduation. "The people sitting before us today are not the same people who walked into this program. They put in the hard work, faced difficult challenges, and earned this moment. But they didn't do it alone. This program is successful because of the incredible team behind it: our peer support specialists, field ministers, teachers, instructors, mental health professionals, and staff who invest in these men every single day. Their dedication is changing lives, and I couldn't be more grateful for what they do." The lessons learned through the BMU extend beyond the facility, preparing graduates to make healthier decisions, strengthen family relationships, and become productive members of their communities.

As the BMU continues to grow, the success of its first graduating class serves as a reminder that rehabilitation is possible when individuals are given the opportunity, support, and tools to change. The MDOC remains committed to expanding evidence-based programming that promotes recovery, reduces recidivism, and strengthens Mississippi communities.

