

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 25, 2017
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MDOC Requires Offenders to Do Community Service Work

JACKSON – Offenders who commit minor to intermediate offenses, including not paying supervision fees or not reporting on time, while under the supervision of the Mississippi Department of Corrections are being required to do community service.

Community Service Day is being held on Saturdays for persons on probation, parole, house arrest or earned release supervision in each of the three Community Corrections regions.

For example, last Saturday, offenders supervised in Hinds County cleaned up around the Probation and Parole Office building at 421 Pascagoula St. in downtown Jackson. In Gulfport, 30 offenders set up two computer labs and a math lab for the Harrison County School District. This Saturday, they will clean up after a basketball tournament.

Up to 20 offenders who report to the Monroe County Probation and Parole Office pick up trash twice a month on road sides, wash cars and work at the local dog pound. In addition, the Lee County Probation and Parole Office and the Tupelo Public Works Department have an agreement to allow offenders to work alongside municipal-court ordered offenders in various clean-up projects beginning in November.

“Oftentimes, offenders may not need to be brought back before the court or locked up again,” Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall said. “But they need to be held accountable without costing taxpayers, and what better way than to have our communities benefit through their service. MDOC’s ultimate goal is to keep offenders out of prison without jeopardizing public safety.”

Offenders who commit new crimes are not eligible. Those offenders are brought back before the court and are likely returned to incarceration, including prison or a technical violation center.

“We have had problems for a long time with offenders not meeting their obligations after their release and, as Commissioner Hall stated, this is a way to hold them accountable while also providing a service to the community,” said Cecil Lott, acting associate director of Community Corrections in Region II, who supervised those working last Saturday. “We have wanted to do this for a while, and we now have the staff to make it happen.”

Lott said plans include helping other agencies with projects such as cleaning city parks and facilities.

Offenders who do not show up to work will face additional sanctions and could find themselves back in court. “We can add additional restrictions, called graduated sanctions, and if they continue to be a problem, they could be called back before a judge and face revocation,” Lott said.

Probation and parole agents are empowered by the criminal justice reform act, commonly referred to as House Bill 585, to use graduated sanctions when offenders do not comply with the terms of their supervision.

“The public deserves to have these fines and restitutions paid by the offenders who need to understand there are consequences for not following the rules,” Lott said.