Commission on Children's Justice to meet on May 16 in Jackson

May 10, 2016

The Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice will meet at 11 a.m. May 16 at the Supreme Court of Mississippi Carroll Gartin Justice Building, 450 High Street in Jackson.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. will open the meeting. Supreme Court Justice Dawn Beam, recently appointed co-chair of the Commission, will outline the mission for the organization. Justice Beam and co-chair Judge Thomas Broome of the Rankin County Youth Court will preside.

The Commission since its inception in 2006 has worked to develop a statewide comprehensive approach to improving the child welfare system. The Commission will renew its efforts to coordinate the three branches of government in assessing the impact of government actions on children who are abused or neglected. The Commission expects to recommend changes to improve children's safety, strengthen and support families and promote public trust and confidence in the child welfare system.

"With TEAMWORK, our kids win!" is the Commission's motto.

Justice Beam said, "The goal is to unite all branches of government, the business sector, non-profits, the faith based community, and schools and universities to protect our children and improve their lives. We all have different resources and abilities to contribute, but all Mississippians should join together to embrace our children and youth."

Justice Beam will introduce a 10-point plan. The plan includes:

1. Conduct courtroom training for judges, court personnel and child protection workers;
2. Establish quarterly Court Improvement meetings at the local court level;
3. Promote better law enforcement education and communication between agencies using multi-disciplinary teams;
4. Promote the Child Advocacies Studies program at the university level;
5. Engage the medical community about mandatory reporting and documentation needs;
6. Establish programs such as Chaplains for Children/Care Portal to coordinate efforts from the faith based community;
7. Promote prevention and reporting so that the community is engaged;
8. Use the Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System, MYCIDS, to promote accountability and identify areas needing improvement;
9. Assist courts and the Department of Human Services in locating and providing resources to parents to achieve service plan goals;
10. Pursue legislative goals of full parent representation with funding, establishment of a statewide county

court system, and creation of a permanent Children's Commission with funding for the jurist-in-residence.

Members of the Commission on Children's Justice include: Judge Virginia Carlton of the Mississippi Court of Appeals; Dr. David Chandler, executive director of the Department of Child Protection Services; Chief Justice Kevin Briscoe of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Youth Court Judge Holly Denson, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Jurist in Residence John Hudson; First Chancery District Judge Jacqueline Mask; Forrest County Court Judge Michael McPhail; Desoto County Court Judge Celeste Wilson; Lauderdale County Court Judge Veldore Young-Graham; Washington County Court Judge Vernita King Johnson; Jackson County Court Judge Sharon Sigalas; Walthall County Youth Court Referee Conrad Mord; David Calder, director of the Children's Advocacy Clinic at the University of Mississippi School of Law; Shirley Kennedy, director of the Children's Advocacy Program at Mississippi College School of Law; Dr. Angela Robertson, associate director and research professor at the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University; Dr. Lisa Nored, chair and director of the School of Criminal Justice and Mississippi Statistical Analysis Center at the University of Southern Mississippi; James Maccarone, director of the Division of Youth Services of the Mississippi Department of Human Services; Randy Pierce, director of the Mississippi Judicial College; Special Assistant Attorney General Patti Marshall, director of the Bureau of Victim's Assistance of the Mississippi Attorney General's Office; Karla Tye, executive director of Mississippi Children's Advocacy Centers; Tiffany Graves, executive director of the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission; Tate County Prosecutor Ginger Mathis Miller; Angelique C. White, guardian ad litem for Harrison County Youth Court; Rebecca Mansell, director of the Children's Safe Center; Mike Duggar, executive director of Mississippi United Methodist Children's Homes; Dr. John Damon, director of Mississippi Children's Home Services; Dr. Susan Johnstone, retired school psychologist for the Tupelo Public School District; Dr. Laurie Smith, education policy advisor to the office of Governor Phil Bryant; Toni Kersh, bureau director of the Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement of the Mississippi Department of Education; Sandra Parks, Children's Division bureau chief at the Mississippi Department of Mental Health; and Dr. John Pruett, chair of the Department of Child Psychology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

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