



Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia

Office of Legislative, Intergovernmental and Public Affairs

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CSOSA to Train Volunteer Mentors from 20 Churches as Faith Initiative Continues

Washington, DC – More than 50 volunteer mentors from 20 of the city's faith-based institutions will attend training beginning Saturday, May 4, 2002 as part of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency's (CSOSA) Faith-Based Mentoring Initiative. This innovative program, which was announced in January during "Re-Entry Weekend", will match offenders returning from prison to the District of Columbia with local faith-based institutions. Volunteer mentors will provide a critical service, helping returning offenders to re-establish connections to the neighborhoods they left behind.

The training will be held at Pilgrim Baptist Church, 700 Eye Street, NE, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Pilgrim Baptist is one of three institutions that have been selected by CSOSA as lead entities in the faith-based initiative. The others are the East of the River Clergy-Police-Community Partnership (4105 First Street, SE) and New Commandment Baptist Church (633 Park Road, NW). Each institution will coordinate faith-based services for a defined region, or cluster, within the city.

The mentoring initiative is the first part of a broader program to link offenders with the services, support, and fellowship of the city's faith-based institutions. "We believe we can have a positive impact on recidivism by connecting offenders to the social systems they lacked before they were incarcerated," said Jasper Ormond, Interim Director of CSOSA. "These institutions are a tremendous force for community cohesiveness. They can give the offender a sense of belonging that will provide an incentive for positive change."

In the coming months, CSOSA and the lead institutions will develop a resource inventory and referral process to place offenders in faith-based programs such as job training, transitional housing, or substance abuse counseling. CSOSA has provided limited funding to the lead churches to facilitate this effort.

CSOSA estimates that approximately 2,000 offenders will return to the District of Columbia from prison this year. Reuniting the offender with his or her community has gained new importance since the District's prisoners are now placed in Federal facilities, often hundreds of miles from home.