



Joint Legislative Committee on Performance  
Evaluation and Expenditure Review



# CY 2025 Annual Review of Selected County Work Release Programs

# PEER Committee

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## **About PEER:**

The Mississippi Legislature created the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER Committee) by statute in 1973. A joint committee, the PEER Committee is composed of seven members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House and seven members of the Senate appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. Appointments are made for four-year terms, with one Senator and one Representative appointed from each of the U.S. Congressional Districts and three at-large members appointed from each house. Committee officers are elected by the membership, with officers alternating annually between the two houses. All Committee actions by statute require a majority vote of four Representatives and four Senators voting in the affirmative.

Mississippi's constitution gives the Legislature broad power to conduct examinations and investigations. PEER is authorized by law to review any public entity, including contractors supported in whole or in part by public funds, and to address any issues that may require legislative action. PEER has statutory access to all state and local records and has subpoena power to compel testimony or the production of documents.

PEER provides a variety of services to the Legislature, including program evaluations, economy and efficiency reviews, financial audits, limited scope evaluations, fiscal notes, and other governmental research and assistance. The Committee identifies inefficiency or ineffectiveness or a failure to accomplish legislative objectives, and makes recommendations for redefinition, redirection, redistribution and/or restructuring of Mississippi government. As directed by and subject to the prior approval of the PEER Committee, the Committee's professional staff executes audit and evaluation projects obtaining information and developing options for consideration by the Committee. The PEER Committee releases reports to the Legislature, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, the agency examined, and the general public.

The Committee assigns top priority to written requests from individual legislators and legislative committees. The Committee also considers PEER staff proposals and written requests from state officials and others.

## Report Highlights

November 18, 2025

# BACKGROUND

Beginning in calendar year 2024, MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 (1972) requires the PEER Committee to annually review the effectiveness of any pilot work release programs established by the Sheriffs of Harrison, Hinds, Lee, and Rankin counties, and provide a report to the Legislature by December 1st of each year. The statute provides specific requirements that programs must comply with, including providing data to PEER in six-month intervals.

The first and only work release program established under this CODE section was established by the Rankin County Sheriff in May 2021. While Harrison, Hinds, and Lee counties have not established a work release program, it is important to note that these counties are not at odds with any statutory requirements because they are authorized but not required to establish a program.

### Definition of a Work Release Program

A work release program is a reentry program for adult offenders that allows low-risk offenders nearing the end of their sentences (i.e., less than one year) to work regular jobs in the community and earn wages to help pay restitution, court costs, child support, and help to offset costs of incarceration.

### Program Participation

From October 2024 through August 2025, there have been a total of 34 offenders that have previously or are currently participating in the work release program. Of these 34 participants, 79% were male. Further, the majority of program participants were convicted on charges related to controlled substances (i.e., possession, sale/distribution, and controlled substance violations).

The average duration that an offender participates in the work release program prior to completion is 245 days or roughly 8.1 months.

### Rankin County Compliance with State Law

While the Rankin County Sheriff's Department complies with many of the statutory requirements, it has not fully adhered to the eligibility requirement that an offender must be within one year of release.

From October 2024 through August 2025, 8 of the 34 offenders (24%) participated in the program for more than one year. Therefore, the Department does not comply with this program eligibility requirement established in state law and through its internal policy.

| Statutory Requirements                                                        | Compliance (✓/✗) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Adopt and publish rules for the work release program.                         | ✓                |
| No more than 25 participants at a single time.                                | ✓                |
| No participating offenders convicted of a crime of violence.                  | ✓                |
| Collect and maintain monthly data elements for program participants.          | ✓                |
| Participants shall establish a bank account and distribute wages accordingly. | ✓                |
| Participating employers shall pay no less than the federal minimum wage.      | ✓                |
| Share all collected data with PEER in six-month intervals.                    | ✗                |
| Data shall be submitted to PEER in a sortable, electronic format.             | ✓                |
| No offender having more than one year remaining on his or her sentence.       | ✗                |

### Recommendations

In regard to its work release program, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department should:

- provide PEER with data reports in six-month intervals as required by MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473;
- ensure that it adheres to the eligibility requirements that an offender be within his or her last year of sentence in order to participate in the program;
- establish a data dictionary and create a formal report template used to provide data to PEER;
- consider amending internal policy to specify and establish a formal process for how participant earning should be divided or distributed once a participant satisfies payment for all fines, restitution, or costs; and,
- establish formal reports that document:
  - the total number of participants who were arrested for a new criminal offense, convicted of a new crime while in the program, and the total number of participants who completed the program and were convicted of a new crime within three years of completing the program; and,
  - the pilot work release program's compliance with specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART) goals.

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# CY 2025 Annual Review of Selected County Work Release Programs

## Authority, Scope, and Purpose of Issue Brief

During its 2024 Regular Session, the Mississippi Legislature amended MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 (1972) to require the PEER Committee to annually review the effectiveness of any pilot work release programs established by the Sheriffs of Harrison, Hinds, Lee, and Rankin counties, and provide a report to the Legislature by December 1st of each year.

Exhibit 1 on page 1 provides a timeline of legislative actions taken to authorize work release programs in these four counties. The Legislature's goal in implementing these programs throughout the state is to help qualified offenders learn skills, make employment connections prior to being released, and be successful in transitioning back into the community upon release from prison.

As shown in the Exhibit, prior to the amendment, PEER was required to conduct one review of work release programs authorized by MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 during the 2021 Regular Session (refer to PEER Issue Brief #678, released on November 30, 2022). PEER was required to conduct its first annual review of work release programs during in 2024 Regular Session (refer to PEER Report #707, released on November 25, 2024). As reported in the review and annual report, the first and only work release program under this CODE section was established by the Rankin County Sheriff in May 2021. Due to the program's infancy, the review was limited to program compliance in state statute.

## Exhibit 1: Timeline of Legislative Actions Authorizing County Work Release Programs

| Year of Regular Session | Bill Number | Departments Authorized      | PEER Review Requirement                    |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 2021                    | H.B. 747    | Rankin County               | One-time report due December 1, 2022       |
| 2022                    | H.B. 586    | + Harrison and Lee counties | No report requirement                      |
| 2024                    | S.B. 2445   | + Hinds County              | Annual report due in December of each year |

**SOURCE:** PEER analysis of legislation passed during the 2021, 2022, and 2024 Regular Sessions.

Further, as shown in Exhibit 1, after 2021, the Legislature expanded authorization for Harrison, Hinds, and Lee counties to establish a pilot work release program at their discretion utilizing existing resources. However, it is not a requirement. According to the sheriffs in both Harrison and Hinds counties, they are

currently working to develop programs. In Harrison County, the sheriff noted staffing challenges inhibiting program participation. In August 2024, the Hinds County Sheriff's Department planned to partner with Workforce Solutions Group to operate the program, but partnership was not fulfilled because of logistical issues. In Lee County, the sheriff noted that while the office is approved to participate in the program, it is not authorized to house state offenders from the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC), and therefore has no offenders eligible to participate in such a program.

It is important to note, Harrison, Hinds, and Lee counties are not at odds with any statutory requirements because they are authorized but not required to establish a work release program. As such, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department is still the only department that operates a work release program authorized by state law.

This review includes only data and information for the work release program operated by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department. While this is the third review of the program, it is the second annual review as required by the amended statute.

## **Methodology**

To conduct this review, PEER:

- contacted all four county sheriff's departments to determine implementation of a work release program;
- obtained statutorily required data from the Rankin County Sheriff's Department;
- interviewed staff from the Rankin County Sheriff's Department;
- obtained and reviewed relevant department policies to ensure compliance with statute.

## **Work Release Program Standards**

### **Mandates of the Law**

Pursuant to MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473, sheriffs from Harrison, Hinds, Lee, and Rankin counties are authorized, but not required to establish pilot work release programs. Any of these counties choosing to implement a work release program is limited to no more than 25 program participants at any one time while the program is in its pilot phase. This section also states that no person convicted of a crime of violence as defined by MISS. CODE ANN. § 97-3-2 (1972) is eligible for participation in the work release program. Refer to Appendix A on page 21 for a list of defined crimes of violence.

In addition, any county choosing to implement a pilot work release program is required to collect specific data regarding program participants and their earnings and submit it to PEER in a sortable, electronic format. All data is to be shared in regular, six-month intervals.

MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 requires the following data to be collected and reported monthly by race, gender, and offenses charged:

### **Definition of a Work Release Program**

A work release program is a type of reentry program for adult offenders that allows individuals nearing the end of their sentences (i.e., less than one year) to work regular jobs in the community. In general, these programs:

- are provided to low-risk offenders;
- allow participants to work outside of correctional facilities to develop employment skills and live in less structured housing alternatives; and,
- allow participants to earn wages, which can help to pay restitution, court costs, child support, and help to offset costs of incarceration.

- total number of participants at the beginning and ending of each month;
- total number of participants who began the program in each month;
- total number of participants who successfully completed the program in each month;
- total number of participants who left the program in each month and reason for leaving;
- total number of participants who were arrested for a new criminal offense while in the program;
- total number of participants who were convicted of a new crime while in the program; and,
- total number of participants who completed the program and were convicted of a new crime within three years of completing the program.

This section further requires that data also be collected and reported monthly regarding:

- the total amount earned by participants and how the earnings were distributed in each month;
- the results of any initial risk and needs assessments conducted on each participant by race, gender, and offenses charged; and,
- any other data or information as requested by the 585 Task Force.<sup>1</sup>

This section also requires that the sheriff's departments of authorized counties shall adopt and publish rules and regulations prior to accepting offenders (e.g., policies and procedures for the purposes of considering and accepting offenders into the program). No offender shall be eligible for this program if he or she has more than one year remaining on his or her sentence. However, any individual confined in jail may request assignment to the work release program at the discretion of the sheriff. The sheriff may also require participation in additional offender programming (e.g., educational) designed to supplement work release employment and prepare individuals for successful reentry.

Participating employers in the pilot work release program shall pay no less than the prevailing wage for the position and shall under no circumstance pay less than the federal minimum wage.<sup>2</sup>

Offenders participating in the program are required to maintain a bank account and provide a copy of the check stub to the sheriff. Funds earned through participation in the program are to be divided as follows:

- 25% towards support of dependents or to the Mississippi Department of Human Services on behalf of dependents and towards any fines, restitution, or costs as ordered by the court;
- 15% to the sheriff's department for administrative expenses;
- 50% to be saved and made available upon parole or release;
- 10% for the purchase of any incidental expenses; and,
- any remaining balance shall be deposited into the account to be available to the offender upon release.

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<sup>1</sup> House Bill 585, 2014 Regular Session, established a committee to be known as the Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force, which is charged with tracking and assessing outcomes of correctional programs and activities.

<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the current federal minimum wage for covered nonexempt employees is \$7.25 per hour at the time of this review.

## **CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT: Not for Release**

Any offender assigned to the work release program who leaves the area to which he or she has been assigned to work or attend educational or other rehabilitative programs, without proper authority or just cause, shall be ineligible for further participation in a work release program during his or her current term of confinement.

### **Rankin County Work Release Program**

As required by law, in 2021, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department developed a standard operating procedure for its work release program offered within its broader Rankin County Trusty Program. According to the Department, it has not made any operational changes to the program and has not revised its internal management policy since its creation in 2021. Refer to Exhibit 2 on pages 5 and 6 for a copy of its policies and procedures governing its work release program.

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department has one employee responsible for overseeing all its Trusty<sup>3</sup> programs, which includes its work release program. This program coordinator is the primary individual responsible for overseeing statutory requirements of the program and its adherence to internal policies.

To participate in the Rankin County Trusty Program, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is signed by all parties involved (i.e., the defendant, the defendant's attorney, the Rankin County Sheriff, the jail administrator, and an assistant district attorney) at the time of the defendant's guilty plea hearing. It is then recommended to the court that upon acceptance of the plea and MOU that a judgment of conviction be entered; however, the defendant's sentencing will be deferred for an agreed upon period.

According to its policy, "...individuals selected for the work release program are picked for their work ethic, good behavior and their representation of the Rankin County Sheriff's Office..." Further, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department requires participation in additional offender programming designed to supplement work release employment and prepare individuals for successful reentry. Individuals participating in the work release program must participate in five pre-approved classes (e.g., anger management, financial management, academic courses) before selection into the work release program.

As required by statute, participants must establish a bank account at a credited financial institution for any earnings made while in the program. Participants in its work release program must meet with the program coordinator to discuss reporting and recording of all earnings to ensure that a proper accounting is performed for the participants' earnings. The first week of every month, the participants must submit their check stubs and a financial report of their earnings for the previous month to the program coordinator. Internal policy generally aligns with the statutory requirements on how funds earned through the program shall be deposited. However, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department has opted to waive the 15% administrative fee on offender earnings.

According to the Rankin County Sheriff's Department, work release program participants are transported to and from their location of employment by available staff. However, no other staff aside from the program coordinator is officially assigned to the work release program.

Participating offenders complete the program once their sentence is completed and they are then released from custody and enter MDOC probation. Upon completion all saved funds are released to the offender through their financial accounts created during participation within the program.

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<sup>3</sup> A Trusty is an offender who is considered trustworthy and reliable by correctional authorities and is typically given special privileges and responsibilities (e.g., the ability to work and participate in programs outside of confinement).

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## Exhibit 2: Rankin County Work Release Program Standard Operating Procedure as of July 2021

|                                           |                |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Subject: Trusty Work Program              | Policy Number: |
| Issue Date: July 2021                     | Revision Date: |
| Approval Authority: Bryan Bailey, Sheriff |                |

### POLICY:

Trustys selected for the Rankin County Sheriff's Trusty Work Program must meet certain standards before and abide by the following policies and procedures during their time in the program.

### DISCUSSION:

A Trusty in the Rankin County Sheriff's Trusty Program is still considered to be an inmate at the Rankin County Detention Center. However, those individuals selected for the program are picked for their work ethic, good behavior and their representation of the Rankin County Sheriff's Office as they work towards establishing a career path, better responsibility and financial stability once they are released back into society.

### PROCEDURES:

Selection: Before being selected in the Rankin County Sheriff's Trusty Work Program, a Trusty must meet the following criteria:

1. The Trusty must be in the final year of their time in the Trusty Program.
2. The Trusty must maintain a record of good behavior during their time in the Trusty Program.
3. The Trusty must complete five (5) of the following classes/programs before selection:
  - Celebrate Recovery
  - Financial Management
  - GED
  - College Courses
  - Anger Management
  - Life Skills
  - Physical Training Team
  - Narcotics Anonymous
  - Mentoring Program
  - Safe Serve Class
  - Abiding Free Class
  - Bible Study Group
  - Counseling

Post-Selection: Once selected into the Rankin County Sheriff's Trusty Work Program, a Trusty must meet the following criteria:

1. The Trusty must establish a bank account at a credited financial institution for any earnings made while in the program to be deposited into. Any earnings made are subject to support for dependents, fines, restitution, or other fees as required by law. The Rankin County Sheriff's Office receives zero administrative fees from the work release program. 100% of all earnings goes to the Trusty.
2. The Trusty must meet with the program coordinator to discuss reporting and recording of all earnings to ensure that a proper accounting is done of the participants' funds.

Reporting: The first week of every month, the participants must turn their check stubs in and a financial report of their earnings for the previous month to the program coordinator. The breakdown is to be broken down as follows:

- 50% of all funds must be put aside into a savings account.
- 25% of all funds must be put towards fines, child support or restitution.
- The participants are allowed to spend/save the remaining 25% as they choose.

**Discipline:** Any violation of the rules of this program can result in removal from the program. Furthermore, any violation of the rules of the Rankin County Detention Center or the place of employment can also result in removal from the program.

Any rules and regulations are subject to change by the sheriff as allowed by law at any time.

**SOURCE:** Rankin County Sheriff's Department, effective July 2021.

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PEER compared the programs and classes required by the Rankin County Work Release Program Standard Operating Procedure to the classes and programs of current participants reported by the Rankin Sheriff's Department. Exhibit 3 on page 6 compares the differences in naming conventions.

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**Exhibit 3: Comparison of Classes and Programs included in Rankin County Work Release Program Standards to Classes and Programs Reported by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department**

| Rankin County Work Release Program Standards | Reported Classes by Rankin County Sheriff's Department |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Celebrate Recovery                           | C. R.                                                  |
| Financial Management                         | Money Mgmt.                                            |
| GED                                          | GED/HS                                                 |
| College Courses                              | College                                                |
| Anger Management                             |                                                        |
| Life Skills                                  | Computer Skills                                        |
| Physical Training Team                       | Running Team                                           |
| Narcotics Anonymous                          | NA                                                     |
| Mentoring Program                            | Mentor                                                 |
| Safe Serve Class                             |                                                        |
| Abiding Free Class                           | Abiding Free                                           |
| Bible Study Group                            |                                                        |
| Counseling                                   |                                                        |
|                                              | Kitchen                                                |
|                                              | Wood Shop                                              |
|                                              | Animal Shelter                                         |
|                                              | SO Shop                                                |
|                                              | Storm Team                                             |
|                                              | ID/DL                                                  |
|                                              | Workout                                                |

**SOURCE:** PEER analysis of data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department from October 2024 through August 2025 and Rankin County Work Release Program Standards, effective July 2021.

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Several classes required by policy were reported under different names. For example, Celebrate Recovery was reported as C.R. and Financial Management was reported a Money Mgmt. In addition, some programs listed classes and programs required by policy that have no corresponding entry in the data submitted to PEER (e.g., Anger Management, Safe Service Class, Bible Study Group, and Counseling). Conversely, some reported activities are not identified in policy such as Kitchen, Wood Shop, Animal Shelter, SO Shop, Storm Team, ID/DL and Workout.

## Participating Employers

According to the Rankin County Sheriff's Department, twelve employers currently participate in its work release program. The pilot work release program has added four employers since 2024. All participating employers are geographically located in close proximity, as eleven employers are located in Brandon, Mississippi and one employer is located in Pearl, Mississippi. The employers currently participating include:

- Broadmoore Revival (Brandon);
- B.T. Plumbing (Brandon);
- Dickey's Barbecue (Brandon);
- Genna Benna Restaurant (Brandon);
- Gilmore Brothers Building Supply (Brandon);
- Leonard Metal Fabricators (Pearl);
- Little Caesars Pizza (Brandon);
- Mid South Air Conditioning (Brandon);
- Rankin County COOP (Brandon);
- Rankin County Sheriff's Department Shop (Brandon);
- Shell Gas Station (Brandon); and,
- Summit Correctional Services (Brandon);

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department does not provide security on-site at participating employers. However, the Program Coordinator stated that she regularly communicates with participating employers to monitor and ensure offenders are physically present and working as expected. According to the Program Coordinator, no disciplinary issues or actions have been warranted since the program's inception.

Work schedules and offender wages are determined by each participating employer and vary by offender. For example, some employers may offer full-time positions and others may only offer part-time positions. In addition, continued employment upon an offender's completion of the work release program (i.e., release from custody) is at the discretion of the employer.

## Rankin County Work Release Program Compliance

MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 specifies the statutory requirements that pilot work release programs must comply with. While statute allows the Rankin County Sheriff's Department some flexibility in the implementation of its program, refer to Exhibit 4 on page 8 to see its compliance with each specific requirement.

While the Rankin County Sheriff's Department complies with many of the statutory requirements, it has not fully adhered to the eligibility requirement that an offender must be within one year of release (24% have participated in the program for more than one year).

### Exhibit 4: Rankin County Pilot Work Release Program Compliance

| Statutory Requirements                                                        | Compliance (✓ / X) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Adopt and publish rules for the work release program.                         | ✓                  |
| No more than 25 participants at a single time.                                | ✓                  |
| No participating offenders convicted of a crime of violence.                  | ✓                  |
| Collect and maintain monthly data elements for program participants.          | ✓ <sup>1</sup>     |
| Participants shall establish a bank account and distribute wages accordingly. | ✓ <sup>2</sup>     |
| Participating employers shall pay no less than the federal minimum wage.      | ✓                  |
| Share all collected data with PEER in six-month intervals.                    | X <sup>3</sup>     |
| Data shall be submitted to PEER in a sortable, electronic format.             | ✓                  |
| No offender having more than one year remaining on his or her sentence.       | X                  |

<sup>1</sup> While the Rankin County Sheriff's Department collects and maintains all the monthly data elements as required by statute, it does not provide the actual "results of any initial risk and needs assessments" for each participant. It only lists a placeholder value of "none."

<sup>2</sup> The Rankin County Sheriff's Department is in compliance with the distribution of wages to fees, savings, and incidentals. It has opted to waive collection of the administrative expenses (15%) and allow the participants to receive this amount in addition to the 10% in discretionary use (e.g., incidental expenses).

<sup>3</sup> The Rankin County Sheriff's Department has not provided PEER with its work release program data in six-month intervals as required by statute. However, it did promptly provide the information on September 11, 2025, when requested by PEER.

**SOURCE:** PEER analysis of MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 (1972) and the Rankin County Sheriff's Department's data.

As shown in Exhibit 4, the pilot work release program operated by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department complies with many statutory requirements. Consistent with findings in PEER's 2024 Annual Report, the program remains in compliance with requirements related to publication of rules, number of participants, and monthly data collection. While the Sheriff's Department previously did not provide data in a sortable, electronic format, the data submitted to PEER for this annual review complied with electronic formatting requirements. However, the Sheriff's Department still does not routinely submit data to PEER at the required six-month intervals. While progress has been made in data reporting, full compliance has not yet been achieved.

Each participant has a bank account for earned wages to be deposited as required by statute. While statute states that 15% of participating offender wages may be retained by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department for administrative purposes, it has opted within its standard operating procedure to waive the 15% and direct it back to the offender's account for incidental expenses.

The primary deviation in compliance occurs with the statutory requirement that "no offender shall be eligible for this program if he or she has more than one year remaining on his or her sentence." Upon examination of the data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department on September 11, 2025, 24% (i.e., 8 out of 34 participants from October 2024 through August 2025) of offenders have participated in the program for more than one year.

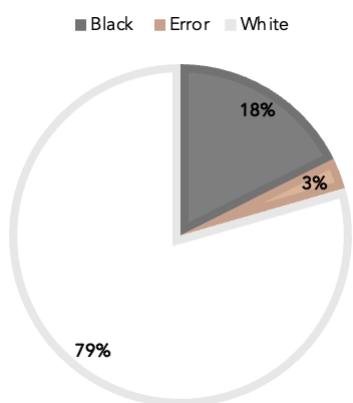
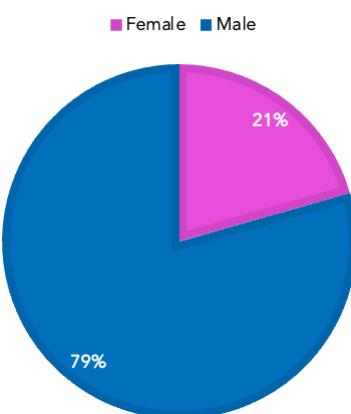
## Rankin County Work Release Program Data

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department provided work release program data to PEER on September 11, 2025, upon request. PEER examined program and participant data from October 2024 through August 2025. The following sections briefly describe aspects of the data elements collected for the program by broad category, including demographics, offenses, earnings, and length of participation prior to completion.

### Demographic Data

#### Gender

From October 2024 through August 2025, there have been a total of 34 offenders that have previously or are currently participating in the work release program. Of these 34 participants, seven are female (21%) and 27 are male (79%). As of August 2025, there were 15 active participants in the program consisting of four females and 11 males.

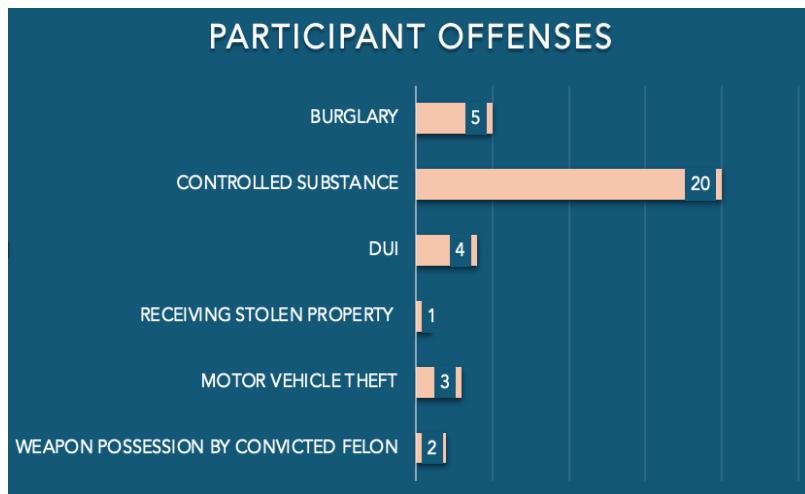


#### Ethnicity

Over the same timeframe, there have been a total of six black participants (18%), 29 white participants (79%), and one participant without an assigned racial category due to a data entry error. Out of the 15 total active participants during August 2025, there were two active black participants and 13 active white participants in the program.

## Offense Data

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department tracks the primary offense for each program participant. Upon examining the primary offenses for the total 34 participants from October 2024 through August 2025, the majority of program participants were convicted on charges related to controlled substances. It should be noted that this category includes specific charges, such as possession, sale/distribution, and controlled substance violations.



The other leading categories of participant convictions were related to driving under the influence (DUI) (e.g., 4<sup>th</sup> Offense), burglary (e.g., breaking out of dwelling, malicious mischief), and motor vehicle theft. One participant was recorded with two offenses. The participant was convicted of controlled substances and weapon possession by a convicted felon.

## Participant Earnings Data

Work schedules and wages are determined by each participating employer and vary by each work release program participant. As noted previously, MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 requires that participating employers shall "under no circumstance pay less than the federal minimum wage." According to the Rankin County Sheriff's Department staff, out of the 15 work release program participants active in the program hourly wages range from a low tipped wage of \$2.13 per hour up to \$15.00 per hour. However, hourly wages were not provided for any participants that had already completed the program.

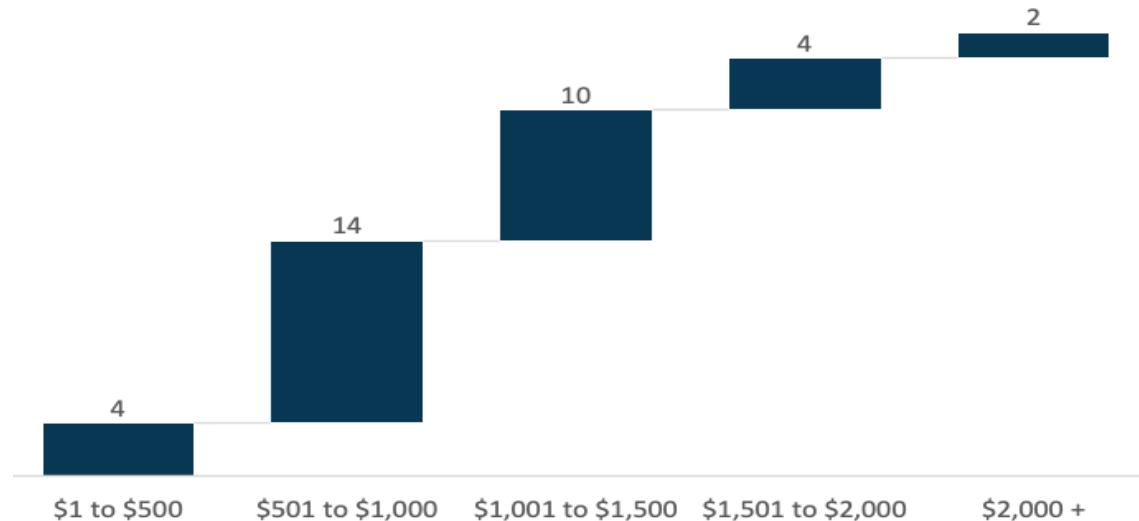
As of December 2024, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department began collecting monthly data on hours worked by program participants. Using this information, PEER analyzed the total earnings and hours worked for each of the 32 work release program participants from December 2024 through August 2025, as provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department. PEER identified 153 monthly payments that occurred for this population over the examined timeframe. PEER's analysis found that in 5 of the 153 participant payment months, estimated hourly wages fell below the federal minimum wage, ranging from \$3.17 to \$6.75 per hour. Of the 153 participant payment months, five included earnings while omitting hours worked and seven omitted earnings and hours worked. Across all participants and months reviewed, the average estimated hourly wage was \$11.11 and the maximum estimated hourly wage was \$25. Thus, while most participant wages met or exceed minimum wage requirements, isolated instances of noncompliance were identified.

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department collects and monitors total earnings as required by statute (i.e., total amount earned by participants and how the earnings were distributed in each month). PEER analyzed the total earnings and distribution amounts for each work release program participant provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department from October 2024 through August 2025. Total monthly earnings varied widely by each work release program participant, ranging from an average of \$254 per month up

to \$2,208.40 per month. Exhibit 5 on page 11 illustrates the number of participants by average monthly earnings wage ranges.

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**Exhibit 5: Number of Work Release Program Participants by Average Monthly Earnings Wage Ranges**



**SOURCE:** PEER analysis of data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department from October 2024 through August 2025.

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Of the 34 program participants included in the reviewed data, the majority of program participants are earning between \$501 and \$1,500 per month on average, with 14 participants (41%) earning a monthly average between \$501 and \$1,000 and 10 participants (29%) earning a monthly average between \$1,001 and \$1,500. It should be noted that the number of hours worked for each participant was not recorded until December 2024. PEER also identified several data entry errors in the data as reported by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department regarding earnings; therefore, the information illustrated in Exhibit 5 serves only as a general depiction of average monthly earnings. (See the discussion on data quality beginning on page 16.)

In addition to tracking total monthly earnings by program participant, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department also tracks the distribution of earnings per month. MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 requires that participant earnings be divided and distributed for certain purposes (i.e., 50% of earnings deposited in a savings account). The Rankin County Sheriff's Department's standard operating procedures specifies that 50% of monthly earnings shall be deposited into a savings account, 25% shall be used to pay towards fines, child support or restitution,

**Division of Participant Earnings:**

- 50% into a savings account;
- 25% to fees/fines; and,
- 25% for discretionary use.

and the remaining 25%<sup>4</sup> shall be used at the participant's discretion (e.g., incidental expenses, additional savings).

PEER analyzed the total monthly distribution amounts for each of the 34 work release program participants from October 2024 through August 2025, as provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department. PEER identified 189 monthly payments that occurred for this population over the examined timeframe. PEER then sought to determine the compliance of the earnings based on the three distribution purposes established by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department. For example, if a program participant made \$1000 in any given month, that participant has an expected distribution of earnings with \$500 deposited into a savings account, \$250 used for fees or fines, and \$250 used at the participant's discretion.

While the data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department did have dollar values in each column based on the percentages specified within its own internal policy, it often did not accurately record the distribution of funds in compliance with the established percentages. See Exhibit 6 on page 13 for the total number of deviation occurrences in monthly earnings by amount.

When examining Exhibit 6, the deviation ranges represent the dollar amount of the deviation in comparison to what should have been recorded for that month based on the participant's income. For example, there were two total occurrences identified where a participant's monthly earnings deviated from the expected amount to be used for fees or fines in an amount that equaled at least a thousand dollars less than expected (i.e.,  $\leq -\$1,000$ ).

Most of the identified deviations from the expected dollar values are in an amount less than one dollar and may be due to rounding convention utilized for tracking the data. However, between 5% and 17% of all participant payment months have a deviation from the expected value that cannot be attributed to rounding errors. The number of deviations reduced in comparison to the previous annual review. In 2024, between 12% and 20% of all participant payment months had a deviation from the expected value that cannot be attributed to rounding errors.

For example, the number of instances where the sum of monthly distribution amounts by purpose category

**The sum of monthly distribution amounts by purpose category did not equal total participant monthly earnings in 16% of all payments examined by PEER.**

did not equal the total monthly earnings occurred 16% of the time (i.e., 31 of the 189 participant payment months). In addition, seven of these occurrences had deviations in earnings distributions that did not equal total reported monthly earnings in dollar amounts ranging from \$10 up to an excess \$1,000.

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<sup>4</sup> The Rankin County Sheriff's Department has opted to waive collection of the statutorily authorized administrative expenses (15%) and allow the participants to receive this amount in addition to the 10% for discretionary use by program participants (e.g., incidental expenses).

## Exhibit 6: Deviations in Earnings in Participant Payment Months by Dollar Amounts

| Deviation Ranges (\$)     | Deviations in Fees/Fines | Deviations in Discretionary | Deviations in Savings | Deviations in Total Earnings |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| <= -\$1000                | 0                        | 0                           | 0                     | 0                            |
| >-\$1000 to -\$100        | 0                        | 0                           | 18                    | 1                            |
| >-\$100 to -\$10          | 3                        | 5                           | 2                     | 7                            |
| >-\$10 to -\$1            | 3                        | 4                           | 0                     | 8                            |
| >-\$1, < \$1 <sup>1</sup> | 66                       | 66                          | 50                    | 53                           |
| \$1 to <\$10              | 0                        | 0                           | 0                     | 8                            |
| \$10 to <\$100            | 1                        | 1                           | 1                     | 1                            |
| \$100 to <\$1000          | 2                        | 23                          | 0                     | 4                            |
| \$1000+                   | 0                        | 0                           | 2                     | 2                            |

<sup>1</sup> Deviations that are in an amount less than one dollar may be due to rounding.

**SOURCE:** PEER analysis of data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department from October 2024 through August 2025.

PEER notes that some of the deviations in participant payment months may have legitimate explanations. For example, some participants had dollar amounts recorded under savings and discretionary use, but not for fees/fines. According to Rankin County Sheriff's Department staff, "PAID" is entered into this field for a participant when there are no longer any outstanding fees or fines to be paid. This occurred for 28 of the 189 participant payment months. Assuming that this is correct as reported within the dataset, there is no clear internal policy on how to divide the monthly earnings to be used for this purpose once all fees or fines have been satisfied.

For example, one could assume that this 25% earnings distribution should be divided evenly into the savings account and discretionary use categories. However, PEER identified no payment months where the earnings that would previously be used to satisfy fees or fines were divided evenly into the other two use categories. For identifying deviations, PEER assumed that this 25% fee distributions should be added to the discretionary use category. Exhibit 7 on page 14 shows the actual distribution of fees or fines into savings and discretionary categories.

## Exhibit 7: Distribution of Paid fines and Fees into Savings and Discretionary Categories in Participant Payment Months by Percentage

| Frequency              | Savings | Discretionary |
|------------------------|---------|---------------|
| 6 of 28 payment months | 50%     | 50%           |
| 1 of 28 payment months | 63%     | 37%           |
| 5 of 28 payment months | 67%     | 33%           |
| 1 of 28 payment months | 69%     | 31%           |
| 3 of 28 payment months | 70%     | 30%           |
| 7 of 28 payment months | 75%     | 25%           |
| 1 of 28 payment months | 76%     | 24%           |
| 2 of 28 payment months | 77%     | 23%           |
| 1 of 28 payment months | 78%     | 22%           |
| 1 of 28 payment months | 85%     | 15%           |

SOURCE: PEER analysis of data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department from October 2024 through August 2025.

### Length of Program Participation and Completion

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department collects and maintains data regarding program participants as required by statute and compiles it monthly. Some of the data elements recorded include the start date for participation in the work release program and completion date. Using these start dates and completion dates for the 34 program participants from October 2024 through August 2025, the average duration of participants before completion is 245 days or roughly 8.1 months.

The average duration that an offender participates in the work release program prior to completion is 245 days or roughly 8.1 months.

PEER staff identified the shortest and longest program participation duration at 14 days and 715 days, respectively. MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 states "no offender shall be eligible for this program if he or she has more than one year remaining on his or her sentence." Further, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department's internal policy states that "the Trusty must be in the final year of their time in the Trusty Program" for an offender to be eligible for participation in the pilot work release program. Based on this language, the maximum duration for participation in the work release program should not exceed 12 months (i.e., one year).

Both state law and internal policy establish program eligibility on an offender's final year of sentencing. However, 24% of the offenders either had or are participating in the program for more than one year.

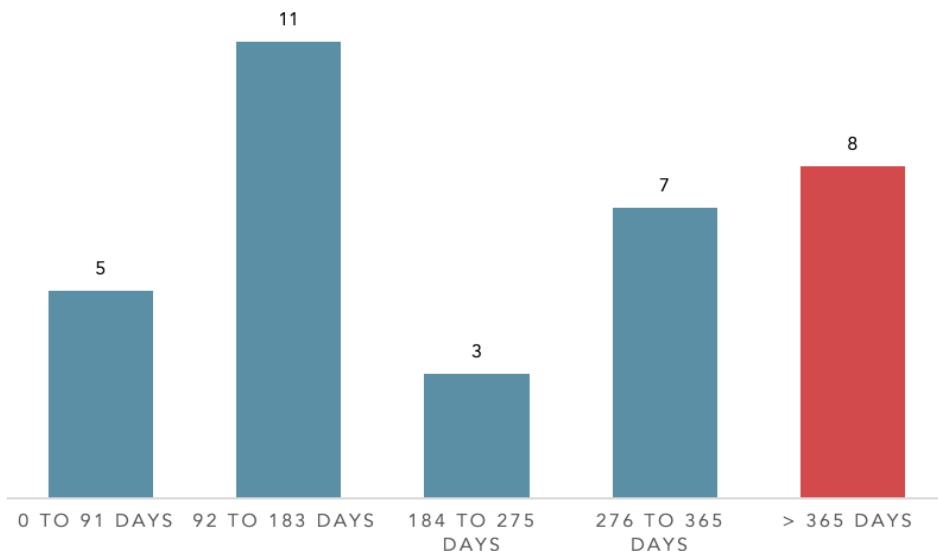
PEER analyzed the data to identify the number of individuals who were participating in the program in excess of one year. From October 2024 through August 2025, eight of the 34 participants (24%) either had or are participating in the work release program for more than one year. In the previous annual review, PEER found 11 of the 52 participants either had or are the participating in work release program for more than one year. Therefore,

the Rankin County Sheriff's Department does not comply with this requirement established in both state law and its own internal policy.

Exhibit 8 on page 15 illustrates the number of participants and the length of participation in the work release program.

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### Exhibit 8: Duration of Participation in the Work Release Program



**SOURCE:** PEER analysis of data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department from October 2024 through August 2025.

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According to the data provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department, 20 of the 34 work release program participants have completed the program. According to staff at the Rankin County Sheriff's Department, program completion means that the offender has successfully served his or her sentence and is then released from custody. While it is possible for a participant to be removed from the program for disciplinary actions, staff further stated that this has not occurred since the program's inception in May 2021.

### Evaluability of the Work Release Program

For the purposes of this review, the focus was both on the program's compliance with state law and internal policy and the overall program effectiveness. The following sections briefly discuss elements that are necessary to allow PEER, or any other independent third-party entity, to successfully evaluate the program and determine its overall effectiveness.

## Data Format

MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 specifies that the Rankin County Sheriff's Department shall provide work release program data to PEER in six-month intervals in a sortable, electronic format. In 2024, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department submitted all program information to PEER in a PDF format, which required a laborious process to recreate and analyze the data. For this review, the Sheriff Department provided the information in Excel, a sortable, electronic format that improved usability. However, none of the documents submitted indicate how routinely the data is collected or monitored by Sheriff Department staff. For example, the current standard operating policy for operating the program, established in July 2021, has not been updated or revisited since its initial implementation.

State law requires the Rankin County Sheriff's Department submit its data to PEER in six-month intervals in a sortable, electronic format.

In addition, some participant data lacked sufficient context regarding timeframe. For example, data on completion of classes to determine program eligibility and hourly wages to determine compliance with the federal minimum wage requirement were previously submitted in PDF format without specific dates of class completion, effective dates, or number of hours worked. In comparison, this year's submission in Excel format included class completion dates and hourly wages for 15 of 34 participants without an effective date. The Sheriff Department began collecting monthly data on hours worked by program participants in December 2024.

## Data Quality

Based on the analysis of the data provided to PEER by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department on September 11, 2025, PEER identified multiple concerns related to the quality of the data collected and maintained. The data provided included a category for "Offense Charged" for each participant. PEER compared the listed offenses for all the reported program participants to those defined as a crime of violence by MISS. CODE ANN. § 97-3-2. Remaining consistent with last year's annual review, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department labels some of its data for offenses in a way that does not make it readily apparent if the participant is in compliance with all eligibility requirements. For example, several program participants had "Burglary" listed as the only offense charged in the dataset. However, this does not specify if the burglary was violent in nature (i.e., burglary of a dwelling as provided in MISS. CODE ANN. § 97-17-23 and § 97-17-37[1972]). While PEER discovered no evidence that would prove ineligible offenders were participating in the program, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department should report offenses with sentencing statutes to ensure that offenders are in fact eligible to participate.

Other examples of data quality issues included:

- errors and discrepancies in monthly participant earnings data (e.g., 31 out of the 189 total monthly payments to participants had deviations in an amount greater than one dollar); and,
- discrepancies for some program participants when comparing monthly earnings, available work hours, and reported hourly wages.

In 2024, the Sheriff Department provided inconsistent participant information, including multiple start dates for four participants, multiple end dates for one participant, and identical start and end dates for another. In comparison, the data submitted for this year's review did not contain these data quality issues, indicating progress in data accuracy and reporting practices.

Further, state law requires that the Rankin County Sheriff's Department provide to PEER the results of any initial risk and needs assessments conducted on each participant by race, gender, and offenses charged. For each of the program participants listed within the data from October 2024 through August 2025, there was no information provided on such assessments. While there was a category labeled "Assessment Needed" on the dataset provided, each participant had "None" listed in that field. According to staff at the Rankin County Sheriff's Department, it does not see the need to conduct any further needs assessment for its work release program as it is a subset of its broader Trusty Program. PEER notes that while the needs assessment may in fact be conducted as part of a larger program, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department should at a minimum define and report as part of a data dictionary terminology that clearly conveys such information in its data collection and reporting.

## Recidivism Results

Recidivism is often measured by a return to incarceration within three years post-release from a sanction or intervention. At the time of its review, PEER identified nine prior participants that had completed the program beyond three years.

MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 requires that the Rankin County Sheriff's Department track the total number of work release program participants who were arrested for a new criminal offense or convicted of a new crime while in the program. According to staff at the Rankin County Sheriff's Department, four program participants have been arrested, and none have been

convicted of new crimes. Rankin County Sheriff's Department staff searched for each of the work release program participants through the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) to determine if any new criminal offenses or convictions had occurred.

In addition, state law requires that the Rankin County Sheriff's Department track recidivism (i.e., percentage of offenders re-incarcerated within 36 months of initial release) for the program. Because the pilot work release program began in May 2021, there has not yet been enough time lapsed for a significant number of offenders that have completed the program to determine its effectiveness in reducing recidivism. As of September 2025, nine former participants had completed the program at least three years earlier, meeting the post-completion timeframe used to assess recidivism outcomes.

## Program Goals

PEER previously found that the Rankin County pilot work release program did not have formal objectives, goals, or performance measures. In 2024, PEER recommended that the Rankin County Sheriff's Department establish objectives, goals, and performance measures for the work release program that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART). Such goals and objectives should consider relevant work skills, wage levels, and employment retention upon program completion. Appendix B on page 22 lists the goals provided by the Rankin County Sheriff's Department on September 11, 2025.

PEER evaluated the Rankin County Sheriff's Department work release program with the SMART framework and found that the program's goals only partially comply with SMART criteria. Exhibit 9 on page 18 presents PEER's detailed assessment of each goal's alignment with the framework.

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## Exhibit 9: Rankin County Pilot Work Release Program Compliance

| Goals                                                                                                                                                                   | S<br>(✓/✗) | M<br>(✓/✗) | A<br>(✓/✗) | R<br>(✓/✗) | T<br>(✓/✗) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Short Term Goals</b>                                                                                                                                                 |            |            |            |            |            |
| Participate in interviews                                                                                                                                               | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |
| Complete all paperwork for current employer                                                                                                                             | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |
| Successfully maintain employment for three (3) months without any problems and/or write-ups from employer                                                               | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |
| Properly fill out work-program folder to turn in to the Sheriff's Office for record keeping in a timely manner                                                          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |
| Learn to balance job inside the jail as well as employment outside the jail                                                                                             | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Start paying off fines                                                                                                                                                  | ✓          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Learning money management skills                                                                                                                                        | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| <b>Mid Term Goals</b>                                                                                                                                                   |            |            |            |            |            |
| Continue to work at current employer without any problems for six (6) months                                                                                            | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |
| Possibly be promoted or advance from current position                                                                                                                   | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Continue going to classes offered at the Rankin County Jail while successfully balancing job inside the jail and maintaining employment outside the jail                | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Continue to properly fill out work-program folders and include check stubs in a timely manner with minimal errors to turn in to the Sheriff's Office for record keeping | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Continue paying off fines                                                                                                                                               | ✓          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Maintaining money management skills                                                                                                                                     | ✗          | ✗          |            | ✓          | ✗          |
| Complete assessment/feedback form                                                                                                                                       | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| <b>Long Term Goals</b>                                                                                                                                                  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Develop strong work-ethics                                                                                                                                              | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Learn job-skills to be used in your work field                                                                                                                          | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Build or improve communication, time-management, and problem-solving skill to further their success in future careers                                                   | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| money management                                                                                                                                                        | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Creating and obtaining work history and references to build a resume                                                                                                    | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Plan for employment upon release,                                                                                                                                       | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |            |
| Build trust among citizens of the community                                                                                                                             | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Self-discipline and stability                                                                                                                                           | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✗          |
| Fines paid off                                                                                                                                                          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |
| Successfully obtain employment                                                                                                                                          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |
| Self-sufficient upon release                                                                                                                                            | ✗          | ✗          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |

SOURCE: PEER analysis of Rankin County Sheriff's Department's Work Release Goals provided on September 11, 2025.

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The short-term goals are generally specific and measurable, particularly with respect to maintaining employment for three months and submitting program records in a timely manner. However, objectives related to financial responsibility and money management are less measurable because they lack defined targets or timeframes. Setting a target for the percentage of fines paid and class attendance, class completion, or competence testing may provide more measurable benchmarks. Subjective terms like "balance" also lack measurable indicators. Several goals could be strengthened by adding a timeframe.

The mid-term goals build logically on the short-term goals and provide clearer time-based measures, such as maintaining employment for six months and completing a feedback form. While these goals remain attainable and relevant, balance, financial, and skill-development objectives continue to lack measurable benchmarks. In addition, the goal of obtaining a promotion depends on employer discretion, which may limit its attainability.

The long-term goals, while highly relevant to program objectives of rehabilitation and reentry, are framed in broad and subjective terms (e.g., developing strong work ethics, building trust in the community, and achieving self-discipline). These objectives lack measurable indicators and specific timelines. Although goals such as paying off fines and securing employment upon release are measurable, they would benefit from clearer benchmarks.

Overall, the pilot work release program's short-term and mid-term goals are most consistent with the SMART framework. All goals align with the pilot work release program's purpose of reducing recidivism by improving employment readiness, participant responsibility, and financial accountability. The long-term goals, although relevant, require refinement into measurable, time-bound outcomes to provide a clear basis for evaluating program effectiveness. The Rankin County Sheriff's Department should establish a formal report that clearly documents each participants compliance with the program's goals.

## Program Operations

PEER previously found that the Rankin County pilot work release program did not measure the operational efficiency of the program. In 2024, PEER recommended that the Rankin County Sheriff's Department track and maintain the costs related to operations of its pilot work release program (e.g., staff hours, transportation to and from employers) to serve as an example for other counties that are authorized to develop similar programs.

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department has not maintained detailed records of program expenditures; however, available information indicates that operating costs are limited. Staff dedicate an estimated five hours per week to program administration, including data entry, transportation of participants to and from employment sites, and transportation for job interviews and banking transactions. Based on staff time and transportation expenses, the program's operating cost is estimated at approximately \$900 per month, or about \$10,800 annually. The estimate cost for one participant is \$317.65.

## Recommendations

1. The Rankin County Sheriff's Department should provide PEER with reports on its pilot work release program data in six-month intervals as required by MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473.
2. In order to comply with both MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473 and its own internal policy, the Rankin County Sheriff's Department should ensure that it adheres to the eligibility requirements that an offender be within his or her last year of serving out a sentence in order to participate in the program.
3. The Rankin County Sheriff's Department should establish a data dictionary and create a formal report template used to provide data to PEER. This should at a minimum include:
  - a. consistent language defining any offenses charged for program participants in order to verify compliance with eligibility requirements;
  - b. results of any needs assessments conducted by staff at the Rankin County Sheriff's Department either before entering or upon starting the pilot work release program;
  - c. consistent reporting of participants' wages, monthly earnings, and hours worked; and,
  - d. notation on when a participant successfully satisfies payment for all fines, restitution, or costs as ordered by the court.
4. The Rankin County Sheriff's Department should consider amending its internal policy regarding the pilot work release program to specify and establish a formal process for how any participant earnings should be divided or distributed once a participant satisfies payment for all fines, restitution, or costs as ordered by the court. Any amendments to this policy should conform to the requirements within MISS. CODE ANN. § 47-5-473.
5. The Rankin County Sheriff's Department should establish formal reports that document:
  - a. the total number of pilot work release program participants who were arrested for a new criminal offense, convicted of a new crime while in the program, and convicted of a new crime within three years of completing the program; and,
  - b. the pilot work release programs' compliance with specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART) goals.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Definitions of Crimes of Violence

MISS. CODE ANN. § 97-3-2 (1972) defines the following crimes as Crimes of Violence:

- (a) Driving under the influence as provided in Sections 63-11-30(5) and 63-11-30(12)(d);
- (b) Murder and attempted murder as provided in Sections 97-1-7(2), 97-3-19, 97-3-23 and 97-3-25;
- (c) Aggravated assault as provided in Sections 97-3-7(2)(a) and (b) and 97-3-7(4)(a);
- (d) Manslaughter as provided in Sections 97-3-27, 97-3-29, 97-3-31, 97-3-33, 97-3-35, 97-3-39, 97-3-41, 97-3-43, 97-3-45 and 97-3-47;
- (e) Killing of an unborn child as provided in Sections 97-3-37(2)(a) and 97-3-37(2)(b);
- (f) Kidnapping as provided in Section 97-3-53;
- (g) Human trafficking as provided in Section 97-3-54.1;
- (h) Poisoning as provided in Section 97-3-61;
- (i) Rape as provided in Sections 97-3-65 and 97-3-71;
- (j) Robbery as provided in Sections 97-3-73 and 97-3-79;
- (k) Sexual battery as provided in Section 97-3-95;
- (l) Drive-by shooting or bombing as provided in Section 97-3-109;
- (m) Carjacking as provided in Section 97-3-117;
- (n) Felonious neglect, abuse or battery of a child as provided in Section 97-5-39;
- (o) Burglary of a dwelling as provided in Sections 97-17-23 and 97-17-37;
- (p) Use of explosives or weapons of mass destruction as provided in Section 97-37-25;
- (q) Statutory rape as provided in Section 97-3-65(1), but this classification is rebuttable on hearing by a judge;
- (r) Exploitation of a child as provided in Section 97-5-33;
- (s) Gratification of lust as provided in Section 97-5-23; and,
- (t) Shooting into a dwelling as provided in Section 97-37-29.

In felony cases carrying a maximum sentence of at least five years, a judge may designate an offense as a "crime of violence" even if it is not specifically listed in statute, provided the record shows that the defendant used, attempted, or credibly threatened physical force against another person during the commission of the crime. Individuals convicted of crimes of violence, whether listed or designated by the court, are ineligible for parole or early release until they have served at least 50 percent of their court-imposed sentence.

SOURCE: MISS. CODE ANN. § 97-3-2 (1972).

## APPENDIX B: Pilot Work Release Program Goals

Rankin County Sheriff's Department provided the following goals for its pilot work release program:

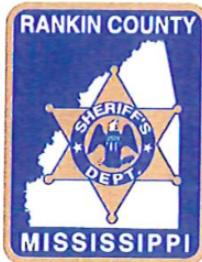
**Short Term Goals:** Participate in interviews and complete all paperwork for current employer, successfully maintain employment for three (3) months without any problems and/or write-ups from employer, properly fill out work-program folder to turn in to the Sheriff's Office for record keeping in a timely manner, learn to balance job inside the jail as well as employment outside the jail, start paying off fines, and learning money management skills.

**Mid Term Goals:** Continue to work at current employer without any problems for six (6) months, possibly be promoted or advance from current position, continue going to classes offered at the Rankin County Jail while successfully balancing job inside the jail and maintaining employment outside the jail, continue to properly fill out work-program folders and include check stubs in a timely manner with minimal errors to turn in to the Sheriff's Office for record keeping, continue paying off fines, maintaining money management skills and complete assessment/feedback form.

**Long Term Goals:** Develop strong work-ethics, learn job-skills to be used in your work field, build or improve communication, time-management, and problem-solving skill to further their success in future careers, money management, creating and obtaining work history and references to build a resume, plan for employment upon release, build trust among citizens of the community, self-discipline and stability, fines paid off, successfully obtain employment, and be self-sufficient upon release.

SOURCE: Rankin County Sheriff's Department provided on September 11, 2025.

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## Sheriff's Department • Rankin County, Mississippi

BRYAN BAILEY  
SHERIFF OF RANKIN COUNTY

November 3, 2025

Dear PEER Committee,

Thank you for your time, patience, and willingness to work with us we try to adjust and fine tune the Rankin County Sheriff's Office Work Release Program.

As the program matures and grows, we find the need to request the legislature to make some minor changes to allow the program to run smoother, give participants and employers more "working room", and make reporting requirements a little simpler and clearer.

In no certain order we would like to adjust the following.

We would like for the crime of "Burglary of an Unoccupied Dwelling" moved to an approved offense under the work program guidelines. In the Rankin County Trusty Program, we allow offenders to participate in that are charged with this crime. There have been a few instances where the jail staff did not realize that this crime was not allowable in the work program and the staff recommended an inmate to participate.

The Rankin County Trusty Program is unique in that it is the only program in the state that operates solely under our Circuit Court System. The program is a cooperative effort between the circuit court judges, the district attorney's office, public defenders /defense attorneys and the sheriff's office. Inmates are sentenced by a circuit court judge to one to six years in the Rankin County Sheriff's Trusty Program. This time is served day for day. The participants plead guilty to time served at the end of their sentence and are released from jail when most are then placed on state probation.

Rankin County has three circuit court judges who hear criminal cases. The judges operate independently of each other. Most of the time participants are sentenced to a specific amount of time to serve but occasionally based on circumstances the judge will leave the sentence open ended. This results in the sheriff's office not having an exact release date on the participant. For this reason, we would like to request that the legislature extend the eligibility of participants in the work program to 18 months. We also would like to do away with 20 hours or part-time work and just have all eligible participants be able to work 40 hours. This would do away with some confusion within the program and provide a more stable and reliable employee for employers willing to accept our participants.

This also applies to fines. Routinely the circuit court judge will set the fines on the front end of the sentence, but occasionally the fines will not be calculated until the end of the sentence. We would like to request that if at the time the participant begins working in the program, if the



## Sheriff's Department • Rankin County, Mississippi

BRYAN BAILEY  
SHERIFF OF RANKIN COUNTY

fines are unknown then the 25% allocated for payment of fines be put into the participant's savings account.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide clarification regarding the NCIC search and the records we submitted. The NCIC (National Crime Information Center) search was conducted as part of our background check process for participants in the Rankin County Trusty Work Program. Each participant's identifying information (full name, date of birth, and other available details) was used to verify if there were any active warrants or recent criminal history records that occurred after their release date from the Rankin County Detention Center. We found that four participants that are released came back with a new pending charge, but no convictions have been made. We will rerun the four participants in six months to see if they have a disposition on the pending charges and will let the PEER Committee know the results.

The hourly rates shown on the Excell Document of monthly wages for the following participants are shown below minimum wage reflect a data error from the participants. December of 2024 was the first month that participants were required to document their work hours. It seems they had confusion of what hours to document. Since they have all completed the work program and are released, minus Jayson Jones, who has been removed from the work program due to breaking jail policy and procedure, there is not a way to accurately find out the correct hours that they worked those months.

| Date Recorded | Name              | Wage per Hour |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Dec-24-2024   | 15. Rusty Lindsey | \$3.54        |
| Dec-24-2024   | 17. Jayson Jones  | \$6.75        |
| Jan-25-2025   | 12. Rusty Lindsey | \$3.17        |
| Feb-25-2025   | 10. Rusty Lindsey | \$3.17        |
| Mar-25-2025   | 15. Braxton Smith | \$6.69        |

We greatly appreciate the continued support, oversight, and collaboration of the PEER Committee as we strive to strengthen and improve the Rankin County Sheriff's Office Work



## Sheriff's Department • Rankin County, Mississippi

BRYAN BAILEY  
SHERIFF OF RANKIN COUNTY

Release Program. Our goal remains to ensure the program operates efficiently, fairly, and in a way that benefits participants, employers, and the community. Thank you again for your time and consideration of these proposed adjustments. We look forward to working closely with you to ensure the continued success of this important initiative.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Bailey".

Sheriff Bryan Bailey  
Rankin County Sheriff's Office

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601.825.1480 • 601.355.0527 • 601.824.7120

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## James F. (Ted) Booth, Executive Director

### Reapportionment

Ben Collins

### Administration

Kirby Arinder  
Stephanie Harris  
Gale Taylor

### Quality Assurance and Reporting

Tracy Bobo  
Bryan "Jay" Giles

### Performance Evaluation

Lonnie Edgar, Deputy Director  
Jennifer Sebren, Deputy Director  
Taylor Burns  
Emily Cloys  
Kim Cummins  
Kelsi Ford  
Will Harper  
Matthew Holmes  
Chelsey Little  
Ryan Morgan  
Meri Clare Ringer  
Sarah Williamson  
Julie Winkeljohn



**CY 2025 Annual Review of Selected County Work Release Programs**

**November 18, 2025**

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Representative Kevin Felsher, Chair | James F. (Ted) Booth, Executive Director