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2011 Innovations Awards Application

DEADLINE: MARCH 28, 2011

ID # (assigned by CSG): 2011- _____

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Mississippi

Assign Program Category: Corrections (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name: **Supervision Fee Agent Collection Program**
2. Administering Agency: **Mississippi Department of Corrections**
3. Contact Person: **Max Cathey, Special Projects Coordinator**
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8. Web site Address: **www.mdoc.state.ms.us**
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program: **This program is an automated collection program that posts supervision fee payments from probationers and parolees. The purpose of the program is to reduce collection errors and to eliminate the need for probation officers to be involved in the collection process thereby increasing the time available for supervision of offenders.**
10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 28, 2011 to be considered. **This program was fully implemented December 1, 2006.**
11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address? **The number of supervised offenders was increasing each year however; budgetary constraints would not allow more field officers to be hired. MDOC was in search of a method to eliminate the clerical function of collecting and posting supervision fees by field officers. From a workforce management perspective, the MDOC Commissioner, Christopher B. Epps was concerned with the amount of time field officers spent in the supervision fee collection process (est. between 10% & 15% of an officer's time). In August 2004, Commissioner Epps**

authorized the implementation of the Supervision Fee Agent Collection Program. This program utilizes technology to more efficiently perform the supervision fee collection and posting function. A probation officer can review his/her Caseload Summary report and readily tell which offenders have an active supervision fee account established and review the payment history.

Additionally, the Mississippi State Audit Department was concerned with the probation officers collecting supervision fees from the probationers. In their opinion, there was inherent risk associated with an officer that has authority over a supervised offender, collecting and depositing fees from the offender. The State Auditor was also concerned with the lack of segregated duties because the field officer was collecting, depositing and posting the transactions.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.
 - a. Each MDOC offender is responsible for remitting to the Department of Corrections \$55.00 or \$88.00 per month unless exempted by the supervising officer.
 - b. Each offender is assigned a unique MDOC number, which is entered in the Offender Information System.
 - c. On the first day of each month, a receivable is posted for each offender in the amount of \$55.00 for standard supervision or \$88.00 per month for house arrest supervision.
 - d. Each offender is instructed to pay his monthly fee to a Western Union (WU) agent. There are currently 826 WU agents in the State of Mississippi
 - e. MDOC has established an account with WU. This account has access to the Offender Information System containing all current valid MDOC numbers.
 - f. The offender pays the \$55.00 or \$88.00 fee to the WU agent plus a small transaction fee
 - g. The fee is accepted by the WU agent only if the MDOC number on the form matches the number in the database.
 - h. Assuming the numbers match, the fee is credited to the MDOC Supervision Fee Collection account and is credited to the offender's individual account.
 - i. Offender receives a receipt for the fee payment.
 - j. The offender's field officer reviews a summary of offenders balance on his caseload and determines which offenders have not remitted payment.
 - k. Field Officers contact the offenders that are delinquent and instructs offenders to remit payment to a WU agent.
13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The MDOC is the only Department of Corrections in the country that collects and posts supervision fee payments from 100% of parolees and probationers.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)
The start-up costs were incredibly low. MDOC paid the Offender Database software company \$9,800.00 to write the interface to post the fees to the offenders account. A bulletin board posting for all valid offenders numbers was created in house by MDOC MIS staff at no cost.
15. What are the program's annual operational costs? **There are no annual operating costs. The offender pays a small transaction fee for the service.**
16. How is the program funded? **The program requires no funding through the State of Mississippi.**
17. Did this program require passage of legislation, executive order or regulation? If YES, please indicate the citation number. **No legislation was required to implement this program. Existing legislation does not specify the method by which supervision fee be collected.**
18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program? **The main requirement is an offender information system, which all state correctional agencies possess.**
19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.
Yes, the idea was conceived by Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Finance during a Strategic Planning Session.
20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ? **Two other states (GA and LA) use a similar program, however, unlike MDOC; these states do not mandate 100% of their supervised offenders pay their fees via an automated collection system. These states still process some of the fee payments manually requiring additional procedures, which is less efficient.**
21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?
Yes.
22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.
Parole officers are extremely pleased with the elimination of clerical tasks associated with collecting and posting supervision fees. Probation officers that have participated in the program report a significant increase in time available for other duties directly related to supervising probationers and parolees.

Now that this program is fully implemented the productivity of field officers has increased approximately 14.3%. This is evidenced by the fact MDOC has placed 42% more offenders on probation or parole while the field officer staff has increased by only 25% between 2005 and 2010. In 2005, before implementation, the ratio of field officers to offenders was 1:105 while in 2010, the ratio of field officers to offenders was 1:120. This increase in number of offenders supervised per field officer represents a 14.3% increase in productivity.

Average Number of Offenders Supervised per Officer in 2005	105
Average Number of Offenders Supervised per Officer in 2010	<u>120</u>

Increase in Average Number of Offender Supervised per Officer	15
Percentage Increase in Offenders per Officer since 2005 (15/105)	14.3%

It should be noted that the Probation and Parole Division was accredited by the American Correctional Association for the first time in January 2008 and was recently re-accredited in January 2011. Obviously based on these accreditations, the increased number of offenders supervised per field officer has not affected the quality of this Division. MDOC attributes much of this increased productivity to the Supervision Fee Agent Collection Program.

On the negative side, there were sporadic complaints of confusion from the offenders that began using the program. This confusion disappeared after the 2nd month of use.

- 23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception? The initial concept has changed very little since we began. We have improved the summary reports that the officers use to track payments by offender on their caseload.**
- 24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program? We encountered some skepticism from the officers initially. They did not believe the collection rate would be as high with this program. We have studied the collection rates and have proven there is no reduction in the collection percentage compared with the previous method.**

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2011 Innovations Awards Application Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations and Technology

- Administration
- Elections
- Information Systems
- Public Information
- Revenue
- Telecommunications

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

Human Resources/Education

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This application is also available at www.csg.org.