

State of Alabama



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Announcement regarding the retirement of Executive Director, J. Walter Wood, Jr.:**

J. Walter Wood, Jr., the longest serving state juvenile corrections executive in the U.S., retired June 30, 2014. He most recently served for fifteen years as Executive Director of Alabama's Department of Youth Services. At the June 27 Youth Services Board meeting Mr. Wood's forty three year career was recognized in tributes from Alabama Public Officials, a personal tribute by staff from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and a standing ovation from the DYS Board, public officials, staff and guests present.

Mr. Wood recognized his staff, the DYS Board and the Agency's many partners as the catalysts for change in recent juvenile justice system reforms and improved treatment options for Alabama's young offenders. The Department's work on juvenile system reform has been recognized by The Southern Legislative Conference and The Kennedy School of Government/Ashe Center for Democratic Governance and was described by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as "government done right." Former Governor Bob Riley recognized Mr. Wood with the "Governor's Award for Distinguished Service to Alabama" for his continued advocacy to promote improved treatment programs for Alabama's troubled youth, his collaborative work with Alabama's Universities and his efforts to empower local communities to develop non-residential treatment programs for low risk, non-criminal offenders.

Mr. Wood began his career as a juvenile probation officer in Cleveland, Mississippi and served in regional and state level management positions before being appointed Executive Director of the Alabama Department of Youth Services in July, 1999. Mr. Wood was the first state juvenile corrections executive to earn the "Certified Corrections Executive" designation from the American Correctional Association's Commission on Professional Certification and has been an active member of numerous corrections related professional organizations. A certified DOJ PREA Auditor, Mr. Wood plans to remain active in numerous juvenile justice related projects.