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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2012

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Announcement of Personnel Action at the Gainesville RYDC

(GAINESVILLE) — Today, Commissioner L. Gale Buckner at the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice authorized another staff dismissal in the recent series of sweeping personnel actions designed to enforce safety and security reforms within the Department.

The system-wide crackdown on policy violations and officer misconduct has once again reached outside the Augusta Youth Development Campus where it was first focused by the DJJ Commissioner in late November.

This time the Commissioner announced the termination of a staff member at the RYDC facility in Gainesville, Georgia.

Juvenile Corrections Officer Ardith Brown was terminated from the Gainesville Regional Youth Detention Center today, following an investigation into allegations of an inappropriate relationship with a resident under the care and custody of the Department.

Allegations of officer misconduct at facilities like the Gainesville RYDC have been the target of surprise inspections and investigations ordered by Commissioner Buckner since she took office three months ago.

After the Commissioner's Safety and Security Teams began their probe at the YDC in Augusta, the RYDC in Gainesville became the first secure facility examined under the DJJ microscope as the inspection teams took their crackdown statewide. Twenty-seven DJJ secure facilities have undergone the same intense examinations in just seven weeks.

"As a result of those surprise inspections the majority of our Juvenile Corrections Officers throughout the system have become more diligent in monitoring youth activity at our facilities," said Commissioner Buckner. "That's how this current misconduct allegation came to light. As we had hoped, all these security sweeps and facility inspections have already made a positive impact on most Corrections Officers throughout our secure campuses," said the Commissioner.

JCO Brown was immediately removed from duty and placed on suspension with pay when this investigation began last week. Brown's termination letter was delivered today.

The DJJ Commissioner also emphasized that Georgians should know that today's disciplinary action at the Gainesville RYDC in no way presents a picture of the majority of corrections professionals working at the Department of Juvenile Justice.

"Our DJJ professionals work round the clock and around the state to protect the public while serving the needs of our troubled youth," said Commissioner Buckner. "We've wasted no time taking these administrative actions wherever they're needed to remove policy violators from positions of responsibility over Georgia's youth in detention," said Buckner.

Commissioner Buckner predicted more misconduct violations may come to light as DJJ investigators continue to receive cooperation from DJJ Corrections Staff. Buckner promised the agency will fast-track additional corrective measures wherever they're needed.

(END RELEASE)

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