



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT  
OF **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE  
**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

Avery D. Niles, Commissioner

Jim Shuler, Director  
Office of Communications



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**DJJ Commissioner Orders Review of Justice Dept Sexual Misconduct Report  
Georgia's Prison Rape Elimination Committee to Analyze Federal Survey**

**(ATLANTA - GA)** A federal report based on juvenile inmate surveys alleges that some of Georgia's youth detention centers are among the nation's worst for sexual assaults involving inmates. In the survey, the Bureau of Justice Statistics ranked Georgia as one of four states along with Ohio, Illinois, and South Carolina with the highest rates of sexual misconduct in the country. The Department of Justice defines sexual victimization as "any unwanted sexual activity between youth and all sexual activity between youth and staff".

"We're truly concerned to hear these allegations of sexual misconduct coming from juvenile residents who responded to the survey last year," said Commissioner Avery D. Niles at the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. "However we are also encouraged to see our residents speak up, speak out, and say 'NO' to sexual abuse whether it's inside or outside our secure facilities. From the moment they walk in our centers, we work hard to educate our youth in custody so they won't be intimidated about seeking help if they should ever encounter these types of abuses," the Commissioner said.

The results of the 2012 National Survey of Youth in Custody included four Georgia juvenile detention centers in a national list of 13 facilities with the highest rates of sexual misconduct. The Georgia data was based on survey answers provided anonymously by youth in custody at several DJJ detention facilities.

"We have a Zero Tolerance policy in Georgia for P.R.E.A. violations," Commissioner Niles said. "P.R.E.A." is the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act. Georgia is considered a national leader in the PREA program integration process to combat sexual victimization. DJJ has formed a standing P.R.E.A. Advisory Committee to monitor strict compliance in all Georgia juvenile detention centers. Today Commissioner Niles said that committee will report directly to him with their findings on this survey.

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**(PAGE TWO)**

"I'm ordering a review by DJJ's P.R.E.A. Advisory Committee to look for facts behind Georgia's ranking in this Department of Justice sexual misconduct report," said Commissioner Niles. "Even though the report is based on anonymous surveys, I want the committee to analyze the report for any significant data which could help lead to arrests and convictions for staff sexual misconduct," Niles said.

The Commissioner said if the P.R.E.A. Committee presents actionable findings, he intends to assign the case to a special Internal Affairs investigator for follow up and possible prosecution if evidence warrants.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Niles said he was expecting an increased number of survey responses to come from Georgia's youth in custody this year, because DJJ has one of the most proactive youth education PREA programs in the country.

"We want to continue to build a "reporting culture" among our youth in custody," the Commissioner said. "DJJ will take a hard look at this. DJJ will always teach our youth to break the silence and say 'NO' to sexual abuse."

**(END RELEASE)**