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**MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON**

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**Task force to address inequities  
in the criminal justice system**

On Monday, November 20, 2000, a task force formed by Multnomah County's Public Safety Coordinating Council held its first meeting to further its efforts to address the over-representation of minorities in the local criminal justice system.

Formation of the Racial Over-representation in the Criminal Justice System (ROCS) task force is considered a next step in the ongoing effort of a working group to the Public Safety Coordinating Council. The Council recently released a report titled *Ensuring Equitable Treatment in the Criminal Justice System: Addressing Over-representation of Racial and Ethnic Minorities - An Assessment and Action Plan*.

The report, which is the culmination of the two year effort of the working group, contains essential statistical evidence and demographic data that confirms the existence of minority over-representation in the local criminal justice system. This preliminary work, lead by District Attorney Michael Schrunk, was a first step towards creating an ongoing dialogue and system-wide focus on this issue.

In order to continue the working group's efforts, Michael Shrunk, asked Reverend Ronald Williams of Bethel AME of Portland Oregon to co-chair the ROCS task force. Reverend Williams is currently involved with the Portland Police Bureau's Blue Ribbon Panel on Racial Profiling and is expected to be an integral player in bringing the community and policy makers together to talk about over-representation.

"Now that the 'number-crunchers' and statisticians have completed their work, Reverend Williams and I believe everyone should be included in our discussions as we move forward," stated District Attorney Schrunk. "The participation of the community is not only essential to the success of the task force, but crucial to identifying solutions to the problem."

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Reverend Williams stressed the need for diversity in the make up of the task force. “In order to truly address the issue of minority over-representation, we must involve people who have been on the other side of the law,” he said. “I want this community to participate in order to come up with some answers and solutions.”

The ROCS task force is charged with developing an action plan that identifies effective, immediate, short-term and long-term strategies to address and reduce the trend of minority over-representation.

Bill Feyerherm, Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies at Portland State University, who has been involved in research in this area for over 20 years said, “the efforts in Multnomah County are groundbreaking. No other community has this level of collaboration between community members and justice professionals working together to deal with the issues of over-representation.”

Approximately 30 people, including law enforcement, judicial, social service representatives, and community members have been asked to participate. Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker, Gresham Police Chief Bernie Giusto, Multnomah County Sheriff Dan Noelle, and Multnomah County Commissioner Serena Cruz are included. Meetings will be held on a monthly basis and are open to the public.

For copies of *Ensuring Equitable Treatment in the Criminal Justice System: Addressing Over-Representation of Racial and Ethnic Minorities – An Assessment and Action Plan*, or for more information on the ROCS task force, contact Suzanne Riles at the Multnomah County Public Safety Coordinating Council at 503-988-5522.

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