**Background**

Minnesota statute allows a life sentence to be applied to individuals convicted of murder in the first degree and for certain criminal sexual conduct offenses.

On August 1, 1989, Minnesota changed the mandatory minimum prison term for a life sentence to 30 years. Prior to this change, the mandatory minimum prison term for a life sentence was 17 years.

**Review Process**

The commissioner of corrections is given the authority to assign life-sentenced individuals to parole after they have served their minimum term of imprisonment.

The commissioner and an advisory panel of Department of Corrections (DOC) employees conduct an initial review of the offender’s readiness for release three years before they reach their minimum term of imprisonment and then at intervals determined by the commissioner.

Reviews include information collected from facility staff, the community where the person was sentenced and any surviving family members of the victim. At the reviews, the commissioner will either assign a projected release date or continue the case with directives to be completed prior to the next review.

Reviews are evaluated individually, with treatment and programming recommendations unique to that case.

The Hearings and Release Unit maintains the schedules for these reviews and works with the committing county and the facility case manager to compile a packet of information about the individual. The Life Sentence Victim Response Coordinator will contact the victim’s surviving family and others affected by the crime to allow them input in the process. If you are a victim/survivor and/or a surviving family member of a person serving a life sentence, please contact the Life Sentence Victim Response Coordinator to receive information and support regarding potential participation in a life sentence review. Contact the Life Sentence Victim Response Coordinator by email at MNPareleInput.DOC@state.mn.us or phone at 651-361-7100.

The committing county will develop a community investigation that will capture the sentiment of the community, law enforcement, prosecutor and sentencing judge regarding the individual at the time of the crime and at the time they are being considered for parole.

Facility staff put together all information available on the life-sentenced individual; which could include making a recommendation to transition to lower custody or parole.