

# Commitment To Reclaiming Lives

*Governor Christie Has Been A Consistent Champion For The Expansion And Implementation Of Drug Courts In New Jersey*

Today, Governor Chris Christie attended the opening of a new 50-bed residential treatment facility at Straight & Narrow Inc. for male clients who are in the Drug Court program. The Governor also participated in a roundtable discussion with program staff and with clients whose lives have been turned around as a result of the Drug Court program. In 2015 alone, 5,344 clients received treatment through Drug Court, and 19,080 since its inception. The new halfway house beds at Straight and Narrow are in the refurbished second and third floors of a former warehouse and are part of the Phase II Drug Court Expansion.

## A Statewide Expansion Of Drug Court For Non-Violent Offenders:

Governor Christie has followed through on his commitment to take a smarter and more effective approach focused on treating drug-addicted offenders by signing into law landmark, bipartisan legislation to put in place a statewide, mandatory drug court program. The 2012 legislation acts on Governor Christie's belief that no life is disposable and that it is a common sense and moral imperative to help individuals dealing with drug addiction reclaim their lives with treatment, rather than warehousing them in prison.

- The law calls for a five-year phase in period, during which the capacity of the state's drug courts will be expanded and the effectiveness of the effort will be measured.

Governor Christie has continually expanded the state's investment in Drug Court and is recommending total funding of nearly **\$64 million** to support the Drug Court program in his fiscal year 2017 proposed budget.

- To date, nine vicinages (Ocean, Hudson, Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren, Passaic, Mercer, Atlantic/Cape May, Bergen, Burlington, and Monmouth) have implemented mandatory Drug Courts, with another three (Essex, Cumberland/Salem/Gloucester and Middlesex) slated for July 2016. The fiscal 2017 budget increases funding to support the operational costs needed to expand the Drug Court Program into the final three vicinages.

Drug Court Will Help New Jerseyans Turn Their Lives Around: The rate at which drug court graduates are re-arrested for new offenses is 16% and the reconviction rate is 8%.

- This is compared to re-arrest rates for drug offenders released from prison that stand at 54% with a re-conviction rate of 43%.
- An average institutional cost per inmate is approximately \$44,985, whereas the cost for an active drug court participant is roughly \$11,379.

In August 2015, Governor Christie signed legislation allowing for the completion of a special probation drug court program with use of medication-assisted treatment (MAT). The legislation further clarifies that any urine test for drug or alcohol use conducted in the course of the drug court program that shows a positive result for an individual using medication-assisted treatment would not constitute a program violation unless the positive test result is for substances unrelated to the individual's MAT. Through this bill, the treatment provider rather than a judge can now decide whether narcotic-based treatment should be permitted for convicted offenders who have been admitted to the Drug Court program for drug abuse.

## New Jersey's First-Ever Dedicated, Licensed Treatment Facility To Revolutionize Drug Treatment In Prison

In his 2016 State of the State Address, Governor Christie called for reforms to fundamentally change how New Jersey treats addiction behind prison walls – making those efforts smarter, more accessible and more effectively integrated with re-entry efforts to help people stay clean. The Governor has directed the Department of Corrections and the Department of Human Services to implement the first-ever dedicated, licensed substance abuse disorder treatment program at Mid-State Correctional Facility, which is currently non-operational.

- **New Jersey's First Ever Dedicated And Licensed State Correctional Drug Treatment Facility.** Mid-State Correctional Facility will reopen as a drug treatment facility dedicated to treating addicts behind prison walls – a first-of-its-kind program in New Jersey. Governor Christie is investing **\$2 million** to re-open Mid-State Correctional Facility in 2017 as an institution dedicated to the treatment of inmates. The new Mid-State Correctional Facility substance use disorder treatment program will be licensed by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).
- **Building On Successful Treatment And Recidivism Efforts.** This program and the historic shift it represents is possible due to the success of New Jersey's recidivism and re-entry programs - long championed by Governor Christie - and the corresponding decline of the state's prison population.
  - From 2011-2014 under the Christie Administration, crime fell 20% and the state's prison population declined by nearly 10%.
  - Completion of a DHS-licensed treatment program will also allow inmates to be eligible for social services upon release, providing an important safety net for offenders transitioning back into the community.

The program is yet another way to reduce recidivism and helps all of our people to become productive members of society again.

### ***HELPING NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS RECLAIM THEIR LIVES***

#### **Common-Sense Bail Reform To Bring Fairness For Non-Violent Offenders:**

Governor Christie signed bipartisan reforms to New Jersey's bail system that have been in the making for two and a half years. These reforms, along with an amendment to the State constitution approved by New Jersey voters on the November 2014 ballot, will keep dangerous individuals off the streets by allowing people charged with the most serious violent crimes to be held without bail.

- In addition, the reforms will make the bail system fairer by allowing those who commit minor, nonviolent offenses to have nonmonetary options instead of being confined to jail because they simply cannot afford even low bail amounts.

#### **Signing "Ban The Box" To Eliminate Discrimination Against Ex-Offenders:**

In August 2014, Governor Christie took further action to help ex-offenders reclaim their lives and reenter the workforce by signing A-1999, legislation to require employers to wait until after they have interviewed job applicants before asking if he or she has ever been convicted of a crime.

#### **Repealing Mandatory Early Release Legislation, And Restoring Parole Board Discretion:**

Governor Christie took action to protect the public safety of New Jerseyans and provided needed reform to state law governing New Jersey's Parole Board with a conditional veto of Senate Bill 2308 in March 2011.

- As written, the legislation would have increased the cycle from every 3 years to every 10 years of mandatory parole review, rather than address the fundamental problems that have stemmed from statutorily-mandated parole

review, including the impact on crime victims and their families and the failure to consider inmates' rehabilitative progress in granting a parole review.

### **Signing Bipartisan Overdose Protection Act Into Law:**

In May 2013, fulfilling his commitment to emphasize drug rehabilitation efforts and his different approach to dealing with drug abuse and addiction, Governor Chris Christie signed the bipartisan Overdose Protection Act into law at a drug rehabilitation center in Paterson. The Governor was joined at the bill signing by Jon Bon Jovi, leading drug prevention advocates and family members of individuals lost to drug overdoses.

- The legislation takes a two-prong approach to help prevent drug overdose deaths in New Jersey. First, it provides legal protection to people who are in violation of the law while they are attempting to help a drug overdose victim. Secondly, it eliminates negative legal action against health care professionals or bystanders who administer overdose antidotes in life-threatening situations.

In February 2015, Governor Christie signed an expansion of the Overdose Prevention Act, adding a provision providing immunity to first responders who administer and dispense Narcan.

### **One-Stop Access To Help Ex-Offenders Battling Drug Addiction:**

In his 2015 State of the State Address, Governor Christie announced the first initiative to be implemented under the Facing Addiction Task Force's guidance: A groundbreaking one-stop model for connecting comprehensive services to ex-offenders re-entering society. Based on the principle of Integrated Reintegration, the Governor announced a program designed to streamline services available to ex-offenders to ensure they receive the kind of support they need to reclaim their lives and eventually move off government safety net programs and into the workplace.

Through the program, The Reentry Corporation has worked to refer or provide services to reentry clients including sober housing, substance abuse disorder treatment, employment services, help with an ID or driver's license, pro bono legal representation, and access to wrap-around social service programs such as Medicaid and food stamps.

- The New Jersey Reentry Corporation was formed with initial funding from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and was then provided operational funding for Jersey City, Newark, Paterson and Toms River. The Jersey City, Newark, and Paterson sites are operational; the Toms River site is expected to open in 2016.

### **Helping Inmates Reclaim Their Lives By Attending College:**

Building on New Jersey's long record of innovative approaches to combating recidivism and Governor Christie's firm commitment to helping non-violent offenders reclaim their lives, a consortium of public and private universities across New Jersey are helping prison inmates attend college.

Led by Rutgers University, the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP) is providing access to college for qualified incarcerated students, while assisting in the transition to college life upon their release into the community.

- NJ-STEP is an innovative four-year program launched at the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year, through which prisoners in New Jersey correctional facilities can work towards the Associate and Baccalaureate degrees in Social Sciences while preparing to transition to full-time college enrollment.
- Currently, there are nearly 578 inmates participating in the program, in 7 of New Jersey's 13 State correctional facilities, with the aim of expanding over the next four years to serve 1,000 inmates.
  - NJ-STEP institutions offer more than 100 classes across the facilities, and applicants for seats in classes exceeded capacity.

- According to a May 2013 study, students admitted to Rutgers University under the STEP program perform as well or better than their peers, both academically and socially.

The Vera Institute awarded the consortium, led by Rutgers University, a major multi-year grant from the Ford Foundation and the Lady Sunshine Foundation. This consortium, known as NJ-STEP, works in partnership with the Department of Corrections and the State Parole Board.

**Building On New Jersey's Strong Record Of Combating Recidivism:**

New Jersey is widely recognized as a national leader in reducing incidents of recidivism and reducing its prison population:

- The state's recidivism rate has dropped from 48% at the turn of the century to approximately 31%.
- Since 1999, New Jersey's prison population has declined more than 31%.
- New Jersey's state-sentenced inmate population in county jails, roughly 1,500 before Governor Christie took office, is now below 200, which allows more offenders to begin the New Jersey Department of Correction's (NJDOC) highly regarded re-entry programming as soon as possible. (NJ Department of Corrections Press Release, 10/26/15)

**The Sentencing Project:** "Twelve states have produced double-digit declines within this period. Four states have reduced their prison populations by over 20%: **New Jersey (31% since 1999)**, New York (28% since 1999), Rhode Island (25% since 2008), and California (22% since 2006, though partly offset by increasing jail use)." (U.S. Prison Population Trends 1999-2014, [The Sentencing Project](#), 2/16/16)

**Change in state and federal prison populations**

Jurisdiction	Peak Year to 2014	Peak Year
New Jersey	-31.4%	1999
New York	-28.1%	1999
Rhode Island	-25.5%	2008
California	-21.8%	2006
Connecticut	-18.5%	2007

- [Star-Ledger](#): "New Jersey Is Leading A Nationwide Trend That Has Seen A Significant Decline In The Size Of The U.S. State Prison Population Over The Last 15 Years"
- [NJ 101.5](#): "New Jersey's prison population has been reduced by 31 percent during a 15-year period, the biggest drop in the nation."